A Soldier's Confidences with God

Spiritual Colloquies of Giosuè Borsi

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A Soldier's Confidences with God

LIEUTENANT GIOSUÈ BORSI

KILLED IN ACTION, 10 NOVEMBER
1915

A Soldier's Confidences with God

Spiritual Colloquies of Giosuè Borsi

Authorized Translation by
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Appreciation and Foreword by
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TO

VERDIANA BORSI

"MOTHER TRULY PERFECT"

THE GUIDING INFLUENCE

OF A GLORIOUS SON

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

Publishers' Note

AMONG *the heroes of war, there is none more inspiring than Giosuè Borsi, the young Italian lieutenant who died on the Isonzo battlefield while leading his platoon to the attack.*

He went to the front as a volunteer with the clear and inflexible idea of fulfilling a sacred duty, with the presentiment he had always in his soul of sacrificing his life for his country. He did not deceive himself. He traced a program of action which he carried out without hesitation. To Lieutenant Mazzinghi on October 18th he wrote:

"I have made up my mind to do my duty to the end, and to be a good example to my soldiers. I hope the Lord will help me and that my beloved dead will look down on me and that the prayers of my mother will assist me. If I am sure of victory and of the unfailing triumph of our army, I am not equally sure that I shall see all these beautiful things here below. On the contrary, my presentiment is that in moving to the assault I am going to be released from the ties that bind me to this world. I do not know why, but I could almost swear to this."

Twenty-three days later his presentiment was fulfilled.

Appreciation and Foreword

FLOWERS might live forever, but they can never bear fruit until they die. On first glancing over the manuscripts left by Giosuè Borsi one's impulse is to heave a sigh of regret that such a splendid young fruit tree had to perish while yet in bloom. Had he but lived to maturity how he would have filled the world with the perfume of his sanctity! How many men — young men especially — would he have attracted to the Faith! What new life he would have infused into devotional literature! What masterpieces of religious art died with him! Surely he had in him the makings of a modern St. Paul, a new St. Francis, a twentieth century Dante Alighieri! But as one reads further and thinks — for these writings of his are veritable generators of thought — the sigh of regret turns into a cry of rejoicing, a paean of thanksgiving. For this was one of

those trees of which the blossoms needs must die before they can bear fruit.

These meditations — Colloquies, he called them — are the ripe fruits of that heroic death on Mt. Zagora on November 10th, 1915. But for that death they would have remained the secrets of a soul. They were not written for publication; they were the intimate talks of a soul with God, private memoranda, as it were, to serve that soul in its future struggles towards the perfection to which it aspired. Borsi wrote them for himself and God, and not at all for the world. While he lived they could never be printed. But these records of a soldier's soul were far too precious to be lost; therefore he had to die, and die just as he did, in battle for his Country.

Borsi believed that these Colloquies were inspired by God. He reiterated his conviction that we do nothing good of ourselves, that we are merely the tools with which God works out His own mysterious designs, and that all we can do is to make sure that we are good tools, always sharp, always polished, always

ready at hand when our Master has need of us. He felt sometimes that even in writing these daily Colloquies he was but a tool with which God was carrying out some design of which he, the tool, knew nothing. He even foresaw his death and had a feeling that in this also God would use him for His divine ends. It is well that he could not know the use God planned to make of these Colloquies, for, had he known, they would have been less ingenuous, less sincere, he would have tried to give them literary form, to make them artistic — and so he would have failed, for it is precisely because of their frank ingenuousness, their absolute sincerity and lack of art that they are so powerful, so touching, so convincing. They are not art, but they are the pure outpourings of an intensely artistic soul; they are not polished and refined, but they are the handiwork of a most refined nature. Whether directly inspired or not, they are the written records of a soul in intimate communion with God, overflowing with enthusiasm for a new-found but

unshakable faith, buoyed up by a radiant hope, and burning with the most ardent love. Such writings are the purest form of literature, a form that many have tried but in which few in modern days have shone. They have been called by the most exacting of Italian critics the "finest religious literature that has appeared since the Confessions of St. Augustine." In places they are comparable to the Psalms of David; in others to the Lamentations of Jeremias, while here and there the inspiration of the Apocalypse of St. John is evident in their thought as in their phraseology. But throughout they bear the stamp of Borsi's individuality.

They were written by no anchorite, no cloistered mystic, but by a young man of the world, poet, scholar, amateur actor, dramatic critic, commentator of Dante, darling of the salons of the gay world of Rome and Florence. His father, Averardo Borsi, was a clever journalist who made a political platform of his hatred of the Catholic Church and who brought up his son in an atmosphere of hostility to religion. Out of deference to the

wishes of a pious mother the boy was baptized and made his first Communion, but this was the last for many years. Losing three of his dearest ones in rapid succession shook Giosuè's hopes of earthly happiness and at the same time brought him into friendly relations with the Franciscan Monks of San Miniato. Later he came under the influence of Father Alfani, the famous astronomer, physicist, and seismologist. In the spring of 1915 he found the way of happiness, devoutly received confirmation and plunged with all the ardor of a neophyte into study of the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. Italy had just entered the War and Borsi was one of the first young officers to go to the front. He began to keep this diary of his talks with God in May; he was in the trenches in June, and he found time even there to record his daily meditations. Some of these written at the front are models of prayer for the Christian Soldier, the man who believes it a sacred duty to fight for his country; they breathe the most exalted patriotism and the tenderest of love, at

the same time they are devoid of all hatred towards his enemies.

He foresaw his death and was ready for it. In one of his very first battles, at Zagora on Monte Cucco, while leading his men in a desperate charge, he fell with a bullet through his heart and met death with a proud and happy smile.

They found in his pocket a volume of his adored Dante, wet with his heart's blood, and a written farewell to his mother that was published in the leading newspapers of the world and at once took its place among the classics of letter writing.

And so the Colloquies came to light. Such writings are all too rare to be lost, especially at a moment when a world that had tried to scuttle the stanch Ship of Faith on which alone there was safety, that had mutinied against the Pilot Who alone could steer it past the sunken rocks and devilish mines and through the tortuous narrow channels to harbor, found itself materially and morally adrift and compassless on the wild black waters, fighting fiercely in the

sinking boats, groping blindly after some stick of wreckage to cling to in the mad despair of almost abandoned hope, reaching forth its blood-weary hands and crying piteously for spiritual consolation.

Giosuè Borsi's death alone made these Colloquies the property of the world. Therefore we should be thankful that he died, and we should be thankful to Father Maltese, who has devoted two years to spreading broadcast these communions of a Soldier's heart with his God. May the seed thus sown bear fruit a thousandfold!

ARTHUR BENINGTON

Preface

BOOKS like this scarcely need an introduction. No reader will fail to be charmed and edified, not only by the deep spirituality, sincerity, and eloquence, but at times even by the sublimity of Giosuè Borsi's language and thought. The first thirty-five Colloquies were written at home, and the last eighteen at the front in the moments of inspiration amid the crash of shrapnel and the thunder of guns. They were never corrected or revised, yet Giosuè Borsi everywhere appears master of his own thought and style. He writes with vigor, naturalness and ease, with a beauty of form unrivaled perhaps in the annals of modern church literature. These Colloquies, written in the form of prayers, contain an eloquent lesson to those contemplating a return to their former faith. They pay a magnificent tribute to the mercy of God and give a safe guidance to those who struggle to attain the Chris-

tian ideal of life. They are in truth the echo of the aspirations of Borsi's soul from the time that God inspired him to adopt this method of prayer until the very eve of his glorious death.

Ettore Romagnoli, who on April the ninth, 1916, presided in Florence at a meeting to do honor to the art and literary gifts of Giosuè Borsi, thus writes of the Colloquies: "In them Giosuè Borsi has recourse to God, and in a series of most ardent rhapsodies reveals his soul to Him just as it is, gradually divesting it of every shadow, every disguise, every sin. In this labor of enthusiasm and love his soul is purified, enlightened; it becomes plastic under the hand of God and shines like a diamond; the last pages of Giosuè Borsi are those of a saint. We cannot make any more comment. Giosuè Borsi talks directly with God. A third spirit may intervene, but only in the function of an adorer. Knowing them as I do, I want to express my opinion that his Colloquies are equal to any of the most celebrated mystical books; my presentiment is that this book shall com-

fort and sustain many needy souls who are in anguish and desolation."

What will be the fruit of an English translation of Giosuè Borsi's Colloquies? That question he asked himself when he began writing them. He humbly answered it saying, "I do not know. Only God can guarantee its fruits. To us it belongs to sow; later on, whether we sleep or wake, the seed grows and develops of itself." But the wonderful success that Borsi's little book has had abroad, the many editions of it issued within a single month, warrants the hope that his spiritual colloquies will be read by the young of future generations and will accomplish untold good. They will remind both young and old, what fidelity to the grace of God can accomplish in the soul; they will bring back to the Father's House many a prodigal; and the book will bring home to all its Catholic readers the nobility of their faith and the dignity of a consistent Christian life.

PASQUALE MALTESE

Passion Tide, 1918

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BOOK ONE

Vide ergo ne lumen, quod in te est, tenebrae sint. Si ergo corpus tuum lucidum fuerit, non habens aliquam partem tenebrarum, erit lucidum totum, et sicut lucerna fulgoris illuminabit te.

(*St. Luke xi, 35, 36*)

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee, be not darkness. If then thy whole body be lightsome, having no part of darkness; the whole shall be lightsome, and as a bright lamp shall enlighten thee.

A Soldier's Confidences with God

I

The Convert Begins his Confidences with God

FLORENCE, *Tuesday, May 4th*, 1915

O BLESSED GOD, my beloved Father, my Salvation, my Light, my Good, I need to pray and to meditate. I believe that Thy Providence has inspired me with the idea of praying and meditating in writing; and so I have made a beginning this morning, and I hope with Thy most holy assistance to continue, until this shall become an indispensable and delightful habit. Every morning, in the brightest and most diligent hours of the day, while the slaves of the world are still sunken in the live morass of their blind, sodden sleep, oppressed by

the weight of their feasting and laziness, I will awake with the sun, and greeted by the twittering birds, will offer on these pages, to Thee my God, the first thoughts of my day. With Thee, my Adored, must be my first colloquy. Devout, obedient, and loving, I will seek Thy word within me, O Lord; I will listen with attentive ear to the inspirations which Thou wilt deign to speak and suggest to me, and that all be not lost, I will perpetuate some of them in writing.

"THEREFORE must I write," in the words of St. Augustine. Ever since the happy day in which I returned to the sacraments that Thou instituted, my spirit has become, as it were, fruitful. Before it was waste land, — bare, parched, and dry. Thy love has watered it like a shower of beneficent rain. Thy sure, strong hand has plowed and upturned it, and upon its smoking furrows has cast the seed of divine truth. Now my spirit grows green like a garden; it is carpeted with flowers; the sunlight plays within it, and the music of running waters; perfumes are wafted over

it in waves. This is but a poor and inadequate simile to give an idea of the workings of my spirit. What a garden, what flowers, what light, what perfume! Before, my spirit was the measureless realm of death, strewn with ashes and saturated with poison; to-day it is a living world. Thoughts surge upward in me now, thoughts of life and of truth.

I BELIEVE, therefore, that I should meditate but illy if I were to stop and listen to their tumultuous roar in idleness and lethargy, and so let all these thoughts be lost after resounding within me for a moment. I must, therefore, learn to fix some of them with my pen, so that I may find them again and feel them better. If nothing more, this will be a trial and an act of gratitude towards my Lord. I know the difficulties of the undertaking. My thoughts are many — too many; they are a whirlwind, an ocean, an ever moving chaos of riches. But what of that? In the realm of spirit illuminated by faith there is something like what we see in the realm of charity — the harvest is

always infinitely more abundant than is needed by the number and weakness of the few reapers. But what servant would be so worthless, so mean and indolent, as to sit down discouraged and refuse to do a little, just because he despairs of doing all? Surely the troubles of the world are great and without remedy; there is too much misery; the ills of society are deep and terrible, its wounds fester and are incurable. How are we to remedy all this? Each of us has but two arms, a very limited circle of influence, and slender means. What of it? A little good will, a little courage, and we shall begin to do our little bit, without haste, without anxiety, calmly, accurately, as if what we are doing were all and sufficient to remedy everything.

WHO among us can know the incalculable value of an act of charity? Even in this world its practical value is immense, for itself and as an example: but who knows what is its value above, with what joy it shall be hailed in the kingdom of heaven? The words of Jesus make us

feel its value, through the imperious insistence with which He asks it of us, through the generosity with which He promises us a certain reward — He Who in the day of wrath shall consider as done unto Him every act of charity done unto the least of His brethren, and as denied to Him every help that is denied to the least among them.

AND so it is with the things of the spirit. The palace of truth has its foundation in the depths, and its summits are lost in the immensity of heaven. Let us not close our eyes and turn away our face because it is not granted us to see all. Let us look at what it is granted us to see, according to the light of our eyes and the keenness of our little mortal pupils! Let us adore humbly and not ask too much, for we have already enough for our happiness. The mass of error is immense, the world is groping in darkness; but God does not command us to save the world, he commands us only to save ourselves. Let us not be discouraged. Let us begin with ourselves, without

impatience, without flurry, and then let us speak our little truth. One out of a thousand will turn to listen for a moment. This is enough; we shall not have spoken in vain. Perhaps no one will listen; it does not matter; we shall have spoken for ourselves, and this is a great deal. He who speaks a truth adores God, and the smallest prayer rises to His throne, be it lisped ever so feebly in the deepest darkness and in the most desolate of solitudes. Nothing is in vain for Him by Whom all our hairs are numbered.

THESE pages shall be written as spontaneously as possible, as freely as possible, nay with the greatest docility. They shall not be written for speaking, but rather for listening. Here I listen to my heart, and in my heart I try to listen to the voice of God. For this I shall avoid distraction and seek silence. What will be the fruit of these incoherent meditations of mine? I do not know. God alone can guarantee the fruits. It is for us to sow, and whether we sleep or whether we wake, the seed grows of

itself. God measures and judges us by our intentions, not by the consequences and the results, which He alone rules and governs. But I hope, my God, that in concentration of mind I shall find the joy and fruitfulness of my spirit, the clear vision which I need to love Thee and to serve Thee, provided Thy grace will assist and aid me. If Thou give peace, if Thou infuse holy joy, the soul of Thy servant shall be full of melody.[1]

[1] Si das pacem, si gaudium sanctum infundis, erit anima servi tui plena modulatione.

II

He, Like St. Francis of Assisi, Muses on the Supreme Blessing of Poverty

Wednesday, May 5th, 1915

LORD, why are we so deaf and blind when, to our shame, Thy voice is so full and strong, and Thy light so widespread and brilliant? Why? What excuse shall we be able to find to justify ourselves on the day that Thou shalt call us to judgment and ask us for an account of the use we have made of Thy gifts? We do not perceive how rich and bountiful they are, how close to us, how easily we may reach out our hands to take them, to embrace them, to breathe them, to make them our food and to intoxicate ourselves with them. Blessed Lord God, our dear Father, how good Thou art! How true is the word of the Psalmist: "Thou hast visited the earth and watered it; thou hast enriched it in

many ways."[1] (Ps. lxiv, 9.) And the greater Thy goodness appears, the more manifest becomes our iniquity. Yes, our blindness and deafness are in our own consciousness, in our own will. I feel it, because I see clearly that a simple, easy effort of the will would suffice to conquer all the evil of the world. Every man can set himself free whenever he wishes to; and all mankind has always been, is to-day, and always shall at every moment be free to regain complete liberty all at once. How easy it is! Here is the great watchword: *it is enough to be poor.* Let us see how easy it is to understand that this is the beginning of wisdom and justice in all men and all peoples. My God, that seest into my heart infinitely better than I can see myself, Thou knowest well that I could pour into these pages torrents of truth, Thy truth, but as I do not want to lose courage I shall be satisfied to say but little.

[1] Visitasti terram et inebriasti eam; multiplicasti locupletare eam.

TO be poor means to free one's self from the slavery of the world, that crucifier of the Lord, with which it is impossible to come to terms. Notice how clearly St. John sees this truth: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world." [1] (First Epistle of John, ii, 15.) He who loves the world can have none of the three indispensable virtues. He cannot believe, he cannot hope, he cannot love; above all, he cannot love. In fact St. John continues: "If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him." [2] (*Ibid.*) The poor man gives up those earthly treasures that the moth and the rust corrupt and that thieves break through and steal. Finally, the poor man gives up the infamous treasures of concupiscence, the beginning of every evil. See how the apostle continues: "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life, which is not of

[1] Nolite diligere mundum, neque ea quae in mundo sunt.

[2] Si quis diligit mundum non est charitas Patris in eo.

the Father, but is of the world." [1] (*Ibid.*) Renouncing concupiscence means renouncing death. "For the world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof." [2] Wealth is a bar to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. It is impossible for a rich man to enter there. Giving up wealth means winning eternity. In fact the apostle closes with the words: "But he that doth the will of God abideth forever." [3]

BUT poverty does more than free one from the slavery of the world, it lights one on the road to heaven. It is the foundation of all the other virtues, which are linked together like a wondrous chain, as the very vicar of Christ understood. Has any one questioned the authenticity of the second epistle of St. Peter? Even if the infallible wisdom of the Council of Carthage, by including it in the sacred canon, had not removed the least doubt for me, a devoted son of the Church, its

[1] Quoniam omne quod est in mundo, concupiscentia carnis est, et concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitae quae non est ex Patre, sed ex mundo est.

[2] Et mundus transit et concupiscentia eius.

[3] Qui autem facit voluntatem Dei manet in aeternum.

certitude would have been manifest to me from that supreme and inspired wisdom which God grants me the grace to perceive in it. St. Peter says that the stupendous and precious promises by which we can be made "partakers of the divine nature" (*divinae consortes naturae*) are fulfilled on condition that we flee from the corruption of concupiscence. Then in the purified soul all the great virtues can flourish. Faith first, on this fortitude, and on fortitude, wisdom and knowledge. From wisdom shall come continence and temperance, and from these patience and perseverance, patience against evil and perseverance in good; and from these piety, brotherly love, and charity.

BUT then, why do I seek the authority of the saints when I have the example of Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Master, of Jesus poor, of Jesus who had not where to lay His head? How could I follow, my only good, blessed Jesus, unless I accept Thy lot and Thy example? Yes, my Jesus, yes, I adore Thy poverty, I want it, I beg it, I must have it, I feel

that I shall never be happy until I, like St. Francis, can possess it and love it and enjoy it as my beloved spouse. Poverty, dear poverty, dear liberty, irresistible force that will heal the world, heal me now! My God, Thou seest that this is my trial to-day and that I am on my way to freedom. How Thou helpest me! I feel Thy smile, Thy love, Thy sweet, imperious, irresistible call. I understand that my act of liberation will be the salvation of many, an eloquent example, the act that is expected of me. I thought that I should have to conquer many hard and bitter obstacles, not within me but outside of me, and instead Thou makest all things easy. O Lord, Thou dost illuminate the heart of my mother! Thou givest her the taste and desire for a sacrifice which a short time ago I could not have asked without piercing her soul.

WHAT a day for me was the day of my Confirmation! It is a never-to-be-forgotten date in the history of my mortal life, not only because it confirmed in me the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but because it

has been the center of many events, all of them decisive. How beautiful and how sweet is Thy grace, O Lord! In those moments I behaved as if impelled by a sweet, outside necessity, as if inspired, with ease and submissiveness, happy and certain I was following in the right path. I have always vaguely felt that in order to live well, it was enough to have a blind and childlike trust in Thee; to be simple, pure, and ingenuous of heart, to take Thy strong hand with calm and trustful meekness and to let one's self be sweetly guided by Thee. Now I know this to be true, and this I promise I will ever do, O Lord.

NOTE. — Giosuè Borsi was confirmed by Cardinal Maffi, Archbishop of Pisa, April 29, 1915. He began writing these Colloquies a few days later at the climax of his religious fervor.

III

He Indicts the World— and Finds himself Guilty

Thursday, May 6th, 1915

THIS morning, O Lord, I did not rise early enough, just as if I had gone back to the lazy, sluggish days which I used to pass in idleness before my blessed and providential confirmation. Yesterday when I went back into the world I foresaw that it would be so. I accepted a frivolous invitation, put on evening clothes, went and chatted politely with four ladies of the fashionable world; while I dined, I talked of literature and politics; I returned home later than I intended, and to my confusion I confess that I did thus through weakness. That is why my will was dull and inactive this morning. For I can no longer deceive myself; the world is a snare at best. Even if we lose nothing else, we at least waste our time. Gossip-

ing with strangers is neither rest nor diversion nor pastime; it is waste of energy, however slight; and Thou, O Lord, art very jealous of our energies and wilt ask of us an account of all of them, and wilt number every vain and idle word. In the world we lie from necessity and flatter perforce. There is no soul so spotless, pure, and transparent that the breath of the world will not dim or tarnish it. In dealing with the world we give much of ourselves and receive nothing in return, or, worse still, we receive poison. The world loves only itself; it asks you to amuse it, to teach it, to arouse its morbid, futile, hypocritical sensibility, and then it does not thank you, but pays you back with envy and malice, or worse, with praise and applause. If you are of a retiring disposition, the praise of the world will seem an insult; if your soul is truly humble and modest, the praise of the world will seem undeserved and unjust. But woe to you if you listen to its praise without a feeling of disgust; woe to you if you take pleasure in it, for it is poison.

MOREOVER, in the world we are deprived of the best and purest of all pleasures, the beneficent and unique joy of loving Thee. My Jesus, from Whom I neither could nor would conceal a thing, Thou that lookest into the secret places, Thou that searchest my heart, Thou knowest and seest how madly I love Thee, how I adore Thee, how the very thought of Thee inebriates me, exalts me, and makes me happy, Jesus, my God, my Father, my Light, my Joy, my Love! Thou knowest that nothing in the world pleases me so well as to behold Thee, to think of Thee, to gaze upon and kiss the sacred wounds that on the cross saved and redeemed me and paid all for me. Well, that same world which killed Thee then, that implacable butcher into whose cruel hands Thou, my Father, gavest Thyself to save my life, that world to-day steals Thee from me and takes me from Thee. I, who by Thy grace, unworthy and miserable as I am, have an unquenchable thirst for Thee and feel the need of possessing Thee for all eternity,

carry with me this ineffable secret joy of mine, and in the midst of worldly distractions and ill-spent moments I cannot relish it as I would. Thine eyes, my loving Father, are ever fixed upon me; not for an instant is Thy gaze removed, and Thou thinkest always of me with divine solicitude; Thou never abandonest me, Thou helpest me every moment, Thou followest me everywhere. If I but turn my eyes to Thee, even though my thoughts wander, always, always, I meet Thy ineffable gaze, Thy gaze so full of love, Thy intoxicating gaze, Thy dazzling gaze, fixed ever upon me. Ah! why cannot I do so to Thee with my poor little weak and wavering eyes, so veiled and full of darkness? Why do I not always gaze upon Thee, O Lord? I cannot express this thought better than in the sweet words of the saint who suggested it to me, my seraphic gentle master, St. Francis de Sales. "Consider what God does and what you do; you will see His eyes turned towards you and fixed upon you perpetually with incomparable love. O God, you will say, why do I not always look at

Thee, as Thou dost always look at me? Why dost Thou think of me so often, my Lord, and why do I so seldom think of Thee? My soul, where are we? Our true home is God — and where do we find ourselves?" [1]

BUT the same saint teaches me the truth that nothing can separate me from Thee, if only I wish it. Even in the midst of the world, of its talk and its business, I can always make a safe haven in which to seek Thee. Even last night, had I so wanted, I could have gazed at Thee and smiled at Thee in my heart. Here is the real truth: I complain of the world and I should be complaining of myself. I curse the world and I should curse myself. If I loved Thee as I should, the world would not be a danger. If I did but love

[1] Regardez ce que Dieu fait et ce que vous faites: vous verrez ses yeux tournés de votre côté et perpetuellement fixés sur vous par un amour incomparable. O Dieu, ce direz-vous, pourquoi ne vous regardé-je toujours comme toujours vous me regardez? Pourquoi pensez-vous en moi si souvent, mon Seigneur, et pourquoi pensé-je si peu souvent en vous? Où sommes-nous, mon âme? Notre vraie place, c'est Dieu, et où est-ce que nous nous trouvons?

Thee as I ought, I should find no danger, not merely in the blandishments of the world but even in the flames of a furnace, in the teeth of a famished beast, or in the claws of the demon himself. If I fear the world, if I need to flee from it, it means that I am weak, for if I possess the Lord, no harm can come to me.

AS I write I have discovered — no, not discovered, but rather come to feel — this truth more keenly, and I can now ask of my conscience and discover my fault: I accepted the invitation and I took pleasure in it; I need not have stayed so long, but I did; I was frivolous and vain with pleasure; and here I am punished immediately, here I am this morning less punctual in rising and less keen, more slothful and lazy. It is true that the world offered me this subtle poison, but it is also true that I drank it of my own free will. Thus, whether in little things or in great, man is always the forger of his own destiny. We are very unjust, O Lord, for we accuse the world of a sin that is all our own.

IV

He Discourses on the Joy of Conversing with God

Friday, May 7th, 1915

WRITING in this diary, my Lord Jesus Christ, gives me great joy. I have never before while writing or speaking felt so free and fluent as now, so confident, so absolutely sincere, and I believe that the great joy of this fresh, limpid clarity of mind will grow greater day by day as I gradually become accustomed to it.

SOMETIMES I have thought that one cannot stand before Thee, my Lord, unless he be contrite, grave, trembling, timorous, with downcast eyes; but I perceive this is true only in a certain sense and at certain times, especially when we have incurred Thy wrath, fallen into grievous faults, opposed Thy will, deprived ourselves of Thy blessed peace. But more

often I feel, my sweet Friend and Lord, that we must stand before Thee joyously, glad and confident, head erect, fixing sparkling eyes upon Thee, alert and prompt to guess at once Thy least command, to obey with alacrity and bounding heart. Yes, while the bridegroom is near the guests make merry. So long as they hold their father's hand, little children need not be afraid. We must love Thee, fear Thee, and serve Thee; but our fear must not be sad, our obedience must be that of the son and not of the slave. But above all we must have confidence, confidence and always confidence, and ever remember, with happy enthusiasm and unlimited devotion, that we are in the presence of supreme Intelligence and supreme Love. This is the state of mind in which I try to put myself, when I gird myself to write, because I feel, O Lord, that it is the most favorable, the one that helps me most in talking to Thee and listening to Thee.

THUS, while I talk here to Thee, I rejoice to feel that Thou art observing

me with benevolent interest, bestowing on me watchful and unwearied attention, that nothing escapes Thee; nay, that it is I who am distracted, stupid, embarrassed, so that a good part of what I myself am saying escapes me. I feel that Thou makest up for my misery. Thou dost anticipate me, divining what I would say before I can express it, Thou even knowest it beforehand and better than I; Thou seest my intentions and Thou makest complete what I but hint at so fleetingly and badly. Thou art the best of Listeners, Thou art the sole Listener, the only Listener before Whom one loves to speak, the only calm, good, just, far-seeing, kind Witness, before Whom it is a pleasure to act, the only Judge Who cannot misunderstand. And what makes me feel free and puts me at my ease is the certainty that Thou canst never misunderstand me, that Thou seest my profound sincerity. Speaking does me more good than Thee; rather is it useful to me alone, for in speaking I am seeking only to understand and express myself. There art Thou before me, silent and smiling, watching

and judging my efforts, and Thy mere presence makes me a thousand times more eager and willing; it sharpens my faculties a hundredfold. And little by little, O my Lord, I feel the joy of opening my heart to Thee, of laying bare my soul before Thee. What Socrates did with the youth Theaetetus, Thou doest with me, but far more generously, far more nobly, in that realm of the Spirit the doors of which Thou hast flung open by Thy bloody sacrifice. O Jesus our Liberator, Thou revealest my faculties to me, Thou makest me to discover Thy grandest truths wrapped up within me, and Thou givest me the additional pleasure of finding them by myself, by my own effort, so that they may be truly, vitally, deservedly mine. And so it is in prayer, Thou knowest better than I what is good for me, what most I need: "For your Father knoweth what is needful for you; before you ask Him." [1] (Matt. vi, 8.) Yet Thou desirest me to pray, that I may not forget Thee and that I myself may be enlightened.

[1] Scit enim pater vester quid opus sit vobis antequam petatis eum.

WHEN I talk with my fellow men I cannot rid myself of a feeling of embarrassment, trouble, impatience, and even bitterness, because I realize that I never succeed in making myself understood ever so little, and this for three reasons: first, my own weakness; second, the weakness that is in them; and lastly, the weakness that is inherent in the medium I am using. Speech for me is a poor weapon wielded by an inexpert hand. What I say is obscure in me, to begin with; it becomes more obscure through the act of putting it into words; and finally my listener misunderstands it. But when I talk to Thee, O Lord, this third difficulty does not exist, and Thou remediest the other two with Thy divine grace. But then, my poor fellow men are not merely poor in intelligence, but that poor intelligence is perverted, prejudiced, and distrustful. We human beings do not listen to one another with love or with desire to understand: we oppose each other with deaf and hostile resistance; each of us shuts himself up as in a fortress and lowers all

the portcullises, hoists all the drawbridges, and stations an archer at every loophole of his soul. Instead of which, our souls should be hospitable and open; we should run to meet one another with confidence; we should share and hold in common all our treasures of truth, each contributing the little which he possesses, that we may enjoy the sublime advantage of perfect union. Instead, here we are, strangers to each other, each with his own little treasure to defend with teeth and claws. Thus, when I speak to a fellow man, he does not want to understand half of what I say. He begins by doubting my sincerity, he tries to discover some ulterior motive, or else he distorts my intentions and scoffs at me. If I persuade him, he does not thank me; on the contrary, he is sorry to have been vanquished and will not admit the fact for fear of humiliating himself. He does not want to seem to surrender too easily; he wishes to show how jealous he is of his independence, because he does not want his conscience to be violated and enslaved. But when I talk with Thee, Jesus — with Thee,

the benign and loving, the just and consoling! — Thou dost not scorn me, Thou dost not mistrust me, Thou dost not argue with me for the sake of conquering me, overthrowing me and humiliating me, for Thou castest down and humblest only the proud. The contest between Thee and me, O Thou ineffable Love, is a battle of love, wherein I am the winner as soon as I lay down my arms; wherein I can sing a song of triumph at the instant I surrender. Dear, dear Jesus, my celestial Treasure, how happy I am to talk with Thee! My faithful Friend, in Thy bosom I may well take refuge and there laugh and weep. In Thee, I am free, wholly free. In Thee, my Lord, I am happy.

THAT is why my joy in writing in this diary of mine is so great. Not only do I rejoice in my absolute sincerity, but I feel that it is necessary in addressing Thee. I know very well that I can conceal nothing from Thee. Before men, whom I know that I can deceive, I may happen to lie a little and make myself appear different from what I really am, but

before Thee, this is impossible. Before Thee, I feel that I am naked and alone, as I shall be on the day of wrath, there in sight of the entire universe, helpless, without excuses, in that vast solitude which shall be the glory of the just and the confusion of the wicked. Therefore what can it avail me to lie? Not a single deliberate falsehood shall fall on these pages. Errors, foolishness, misstatements, worthless trash, there may be a plenty, because I am only human; but a lie, never! for one does not lie when there is no hope of being believed; one does not lie when he knows that he will be instantly confounded. Sometimes, to make men believe one, even without actually lying, one tries to attenuate, to color, or to exaggerate a little; we adapt ourselves, or think that we do, to the mental imperfections of our fellow men. But here, O Lord, with Thee, any artifice of rhetoric is utterly useless. Little by little I shall learn to be sincere and explicit, to be simple and pure. This exercise will be a wonderful discipline for me. At present I know that I am only stammering, for

I am still handicapped by my old mental habits; but I feel sure I shall improve in time. At least I desire it, my Lord, and I sincerely hope it, if Thou wilt vouchsafe to assist me with Thy divine grace, without which I can do nothing.

V

He Meditates on Communion and Venial Sins

Saturday, May 8th, 1915

O LORD, this morning I went with my mother to Communion at the Chapel of the Calasanziane Sisters. The last time I received Thee was on the 29th of last month in the same chapel, on the eve of that happy, blessed, auspicious day of my confirmation. Since then, searching my conscience thoroughly, I seem to find nothing to reproach myself with but some trifling venial sins. It may be that I have not done well in neglecting to get absolution again before receiving the Divine Food, Thy Holy Body. I acknowledge that I did not reflect sufficiently on my unworthiness and Thy goodness, at the moment when Thou didst generously offer me the prodigious gift of Thy whole Being. I

acknowledge also that I do not receive the sacrament of the Eucharist with the frequency that I ought and that is indispensable to me in my wretched weakness; but I hope that henceforth not merely the ardent desire, but also the good disposition, to receive Thee will increase in me more and more. Thou knowest, O Lord, how long and slow and gradual was my return to Thy grace, but I feel strongly that Thy divine, fatherly, solicitous, untiring, loving help has not failed me even for an instant. Thou hast kept royally all Thy promises, nay Thou hast been superabundant in Thy gifts, certainly far more than I can see and even more than I could expect or imagine. I only feel that I have been weak, and that on my part I have not kept even the hundredth part of what so often I promised Thee. But I hope more and more in Thy grace. I hope that the enemies I have now conquered, especially impurity and sloth, may never again prevail over me.

I SEE clearly many other little noxious weeds which I now must root up, one by

one, with my own hands. Ever higher and higher, Lord, ever lead me and bear me up, my Blessed Father. I am in Thy hands; make me to rise yet higher. Impose increasingly difficult trials upon me, if Thou seest that I am sufficiently strong and well enough inclined. Thou knowest well that with Thy help I am affrighted at nothing. Thou knowest, too, that without Thy help all would be dead for me. And now I firmly purpose to overcome the many other little evil inclinations which I detect in me, such as vanity, feeble resistance to persuasion, flattery, a certain weakness of will, some freedom and levity in speech, the beginning of pleasure in carnal thoughts, a little severity and bitterness against the woes and the suffering and the baseness and the wretchedness of the world, with an evident tendency to visit upon the sinner the resentment, the aversion, and the anger which are due only to the sin. Moreover I purpose to practice with ever greater precision the precepts of the Church, which are so beautiful and so wise, and above all to cultivate a keener, warmer,

deeper love for the stupendous double sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion. The reading of the Gospel, which I have begun daily since I began to write this diary, greatly helps my intellect and heart.

AND now, having made these resolutions (to confirm myself in which I recall to my own confusion how often I have disregarded them), I thank Thee, O Lord, unworthy of Thy supreme goodness as I am, I thank Thee for the beneficent help that Thou hast instituted for our salvation, and that Thou hast permitted me this morning to partake of the superabundant favors that spring from Thy sacrifice. I thank Thee for having granted me the grace to receive with faith, hope, and charity Him in Whom and by Whom we believe, hope, and love. I beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of the most salutary and solemn of all Thy sacraments that I may learn to love Thee evermore, to purify myself of my imperfections, to console myself in my afflictions, to sustain myself in my weaknesses. I invoke the

intercession of the great Mother of God, Mary most Holy and Blessed, whom I love, in whom I trust, whom I implore, who is the sweet object of the best desires of this poor filial heart of mine.

VI

He Discourses upon Free Will

Sunday, May 9th, 1915

THOSE poor, blind men, O Lord, who seek liberty have found slavery instead. To avoid serving justice they have become the servants of their passions. Proclaiming that they have set themselves free from Thy sweet yoke, they are obliged at last to proclaim that they are slaves and senseless brutes. To be able to assert that they are not responsible for the evil they do, they have to admit that they are incapable of doing any sort of good. In their wickedness they are so loath to respond to Thy calls and to obey Thy commandments, that at last they whimper and say: "Why dost Thou call us, O Lord? Seest Thou not that we cannot obey Thee, because we are shackled here? Is it our fault that we have these chains? We did not put

them on ourselves, we have been fettered with them since our birth, and they have been riveted by the work of men, of the world, of society. We are not free, O Lord. Why dost Thou impose Thy commandments on us? Why dost Thou entice us with rewards? Why dost Thou threaten us with punishments?" Wretches! You have shackled yourselves so as not to obey, so as to excuse yourselves from reasonable service. And this is what you call liberty!

O LORD, I thank Thee that Thou hast not left me among those fools, those voluntary slaves, who renounce the eternal liberty of the spirit for the brief and mocking freedom to evil. But let us see if, in arguing against them, I shall not succeed in discerning better that sublime truth, the Communion of Saints, which is the expression of Catholicism, of universal fraternity, of the wonderful unity and coherence of matter, intellect, and spirit in Thee, Lord and Creator, Triune Light in a single star.

LET us begin; help me, O Lord.

WHEN men in the choice between good and evil deliberately choose evil, they can scarcely ever bring themselves to admit that the choice was of their own free will; after trying in vain to convince themselves that it is not wicked, they disown the sin. But, before doing the evil thing, they generally say, frankly and shamelessly: "Is it my fault?" or, "I was born so!" "This is my temperament!" And so forth. The great thought, the great concern, the great anxiety of men is to restrict, as much as possible, the limits of their own responsibility. And instead they accuse heredity, disease, education, the sins of society. Finally they arrive at philosophic determinism, saying a man is not free or responsible in anything; he is less than an animal, less than a plant; he is passive matter, not autonomous, without a shadow of free will. A thousand causes may be at work within him: the climate, the seasons, temperature, diseases,

deformities, physical defects, congenital maladies, external suggestions, education, circumstances, — anything, a grain of sand, a draught of liquor, certain foods, the most negligible, fortuitous, and ridiculous causes. One single cause can never influence him, and this is his free will. Such is the absurd error upon which many philosophers found their ethics. Now, I am far from saying that each individual lives free and apart from the rest of the world, isolated and independent, like a capricious, uncontrollable despot. I say rather that a man is the effect of the past and the cause of the future, bound to all the human race and to all the rest of the universe in the three worlds of matter, intellect, and spirit. I say that each man has received something before he began to live and that his liberty consists in his very effort to increase the treasure intrusted to him. One man has received five talents, another two, another only one; "to each according to his worth."[1] The master then left the servants free for a long time; and "then after a long time

[1] Unicuique secundum propriam virtutem.

came the lord of these servants."[1] I say, therefore, that each individual comes into the world with certain gifts, with certain graces, with certain powers and under certain conditions. As Gratry well says: "There is a primitive, impersonal education which is of God, nature, and society. But God, Who gives us our beginning by Himself or by His creation, wishes that we perfect ourselves by reflection and liberty; this is personal education."

THUS is man's liberty vindicated, and thus the limits of his responsibility are clearly defined. Man will not be punished because in the beginning he has only one talent, but he will be punished because "going away he dug in the earth and hid his lord's money."[2]

BUT that is not enough, and this is the point at which I wanted to arrive. Is no one responsible for the evil deeds committed by the man who "is not

[1] Post multum vero temporis venit dominus servorum illorum.

[2] Abiens fodit in terram et abscondit pecuniam domini sui.

responsible"? Is not society made up of men? Is not education imparted by men? Is not example given by men? And shall they not then answer for the evil deeds committed by others through their fault? The man who contracts moral corruption shall answer not only for the sin of contracting it, but also for the sin of transmitting it to his son. There is cohesion in evil as well as in good. This book resting on the table makes its weight felt, little as it is. The desk, in its turn, presses on the floor, and compels it to react to the same extent, in order that the balance be maintained. The floor is connected with the house, the latter is founded in the ground. The strata of the ground form the skeleton of the earth, and the earth is balanced in space. It is only a grain of sand floating in the immensity of ether, but, tiny as it is, its mass plays its part in the stellar equilibrium. Thus, in a way that only Thy mind, O Lord, can perceive and measure, the slightest movement of my little pen running across this paper is connected with the motions of the spheres and con-

tributes to and is a part thereof. Thus all matter is united.

THE same takes place in the world of intellect. I get all my education of culture and ideas from the outside, by endless paths, directly and indirectly, from an incalculable number of human minds, among which some are vast and sublime, some fatuous and very humble. There is not a single idea, however small and negligible, no matter how modest its origin, that has not or that may not have its value. I have received them all; the greater number I have lost, forgotten, or discarded, but there is not one that has not left a trace or a furrow, unnoticed, perhaps, but no less real, which Thou, O Lord, with Thy ineffable, all-seeing eye canst easily perceive. Many other ideas, of whose real existence I myself am ignorant, have remained in my subconsciousness as in a great storehouse, and perhaps some day some of them will suddenly blossom forth under some special stimulus, perhaps the effect of disease, who knows? The mysteries of the mind

are so many! Many others I still possess with more or less distinctness; they are all within me; I can find them whenever I wish; and in the meantime I have selected them, combined, transformed, organized, elaborated them, and made them mine; and then I spread them broadcast in a thousand ways, — writing, talking, printing, arguing with one or declaiming to an audience of a thousand, writing a letter that my friend will tear up, or publishing my words in a newspaper that will fall under the eyes of a hundred thousand persons I have never known. Thus ideas live and have their most complex adventures in the world of intellect, a world immeasurably superior to the material world, a world united and compact also, in its vast, plenteous and most varied complexity.

AS in the material and intellectual worlds, so it is in the infinitely greater moral world. The Lord can trace the origin of and responsibility for an evil deed, whether great or small, through the intricate maze of the infinite relations

between human souls. "It is true that many men," says Gratry again, "lack the benefit of primitive education. They are born without moral patrimony, and perhaps as food for their journey through this difficult life have received only perverted examples and maxims. But reason and the Gospel say that nothing will be asked of any one but that which has been given to him." Exactly, but peradventure the Lord will not know how to trace the man who has given the perverted example and bad maxim? Yes, He will, and He has promised it, for after having menaced with one of His most terrible anathemas those who scandalize any of the little ones who believe in Him, He adds: "Woe to the world because of scandals. For it needs be that scandals come, but woe to that man by whom they come!" (Matt. xviii, 7.) [1]

IN conclusion, then: not only is free will in every man, but its effects extend

[1] Vae mundo a scandalis. Necesse est enim ut veniant scandala: verumtamen vae homini illi per quem scandalum venit.

all around it and endure after it is gone, in a thousand ways. Each individual must answer not only for his own evil deeds, but also for those that he causes other men to commit. Man is the effect of an infinite number of causes and is, in his turn, one of the causes of infinite effects. With the evil and the good that he does, he coöperates in the whole upward movement of the entire human race. For the human race also is born, lives, and will die, free to choose its destiny; and the free will of the race is to be found in this communion between the individuals of which it is composed, in these indissoluble bonds which bind them all together throughout the ages. Therefore, not only is man himself free, but he participates, so far as he may, in the liberty of all mankind, more or less, according to the faculties with which God has endowed him and the position in which God has placed him among his fellow men. Such is the image of communion among militant men. Not one is isolated. All are united in good and in evil. And this is why they must love one another, help one

another, and sustain one another; this is why the commandment to love one another is the second, like unto the first, of loving God above all. There is no evil deed that will not have to be atoned for, there is no good deed that is done in vain. The buried talent was really not lost. The master had his useless servant cast into the darkness, but the talent was given to him who had ten, that nothing might be lost. And unity among men is so precious that the Lord intended to give us a warning of its immense power when He said: "Again I say to you that if two of you on earth shall agree in asking anything, it shall be granted by my Father who is in heaven." [1] And I believe that my Dante had in mind the communion of saints in the treasure of the Kingdom, when he depicted the blessed of the empyrean rose as

d'altrui lume fregiati e del suo riso.

THEREFORE, O most wise Lord, I thank Thee for making me free, the

[1] Iterum dico vobis quia, si duo ex vobis consenserint super terram de omni re quamcumque petierint, fiet illis a Pater meo qui in coelis est.

arbiter and forger of my destiny, and also a sharer in the liberty of all my brethren, to whose destiny I, too, by Thy grace, can, willingly and lovingly, contribute. And I beseech Thee, beloved Lord, that Thou wilt deem me worthy of participating forever in the vast treasures of the communion of saints, as a devoted, affectionate, obedient, and loving son of Thy Bride, the Church.

VII

He Determines to Be a Doer and not a Talker

Monday, May 10th, 1915

THE further I advance in the light of Thy eternal truth, O Lord, the more I become convinced of what I have always vaguely guessed and felt, that for every man, as well as for every people, indeed for the entire human race, salvation consists more in doing than in believing. There is no doubt that faith is that "dear joy whereon every virtue is based," but what is faith in which no virtue blossoms? Faith is, of course, a necessary seed, but how often the birds of the air devour it, how often it falls upon stony ground, how often among thorns! Faith is the good tree, but what will happen if it does not bring forth good fruit?

FAITH avails nothing when we preach it without living it, and listen to it without practicing it. Not only is it useless, but it will be our condemnation on the day of the Lord, for nothing will excuse us when we shall have to confess that we have known Him without having loved Him. O Jesus! My Jesus! I have found Thee and I have known Thee, and I see Thy beauty and I perceive that in Thee alone is my salvation. Grant, I beseech Thee, that so great a gift be not lost in vain, nor given to me for my condemnation. Thou seest well how weak and frail I am, how full of every misery and foulness. Abandon me not, for without Thee, Jesus, I am lost. Therefore make me to love Thee, to love Thee ever more; make me to desire Thy yoke, to long only for Thy cross; grant that I may practice willingly all that Thou teachest me for the love Thou bearest me.

I SAY, then, that action is the only way of salvation, and that by action the world will be saved. Should I speak to

men, if the Lord shall deem me worthy to be a preacher of His word, then I shall say one only thing, and this comprises all wisdom: Return to the Sacraments, return to the Sacraments! I shall never tire of repeating it, or of demonstrating it and above all of doing it myself first. Example and deeds, — virtues that are practical, usual, precise, and material — action, action, that is all!

THE doctrine of the Church is not a marble edifice to be gazed at in wonder; it is a living body of which we are a part and in which we live. It is not a palace, outside of which we stand to admire the façade; it is a home which we enter to live in, there to find our refuge, our bed, and our board; it is the Lord's house. At the convent of Monte alle Croci, where I spent yesterday, my friend Father Eletto made me read in the office the words of St. James: "Be ye therefore doers of the word and not merely hearers, deceiving yourselves. For he who is a hearer of the word and not a doer is like unto one who looketh at his face in a

glass; for he looketh at himself, then he goeth away and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he who will seek deeply in the perfect law of liberty and persevere therein, becoming not merely a forgetful hearer but a doer of works, he shall be blessed in his deeds. For if any man think himself to be religious and bridleth not his tongue but seduceth his heart, that man's religion is vain." [1]

YES, Father, salvation is in work. Make me, therefore, I implore Thee through the infinite merits of the Passion of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, make me a doer of works and not a forgetful hearer, because for such a man religion is vain. This epistle of the great father of the Church of Jerusalem is in its entirety

[1] Estote autem factores verbi; et non auditores tantum, fallentes vosmetipsos. Quia si quis auditor est verbi, et non factor, hic comparabitur viro consideranti vultum nativitatis suae in speculo: consideravit enim se, abiit, et statim oblitus est qualis fuerit. Qui autem perspexerit in legem perfectam libertatis, et permanserit in ea, non auditor obliviosus factus, sed factor operis, hic beatus in facto suo non erit. Si qui sautem putet se religiosum esse, non refrenans linguam suam, sed seducens cor suum, huius vana est religio (Epistle of St. James, i, 22–26).

a code of practical life. "Faith without works is dead." [1]

NOW works are renunciation and charity above all. Men are fighting and killing each other to-day for domination, and I believe they will never attain their object. This war will give birth to the moral character of the nations, for it will demonstrate that violence and fraud do not profit nations any more than they profit men. The example of Germany will be the basis of this bloody experience. Italy, perhaps, if the Lord shall deign to protect her in this trial, as I am earnestly praying Him to do, will be the asserter of the principle of nationality, and then of equilibrium, and then of Christian justice and Christian love. To have charity one must have self-denial. I shall work by denying myself and helping others; I feel that I am in the right and that my work will be fruitful. But as long as I talk, all will be useless. No one will be persuaded. Once I act, no eloquence in the world can contradict the silent

[1] Fides sine operibus mortua est.

eloquence of my deeds. There is no eloquence that does not fall before deeds. Men need example and not words, for they are deeply conscious that without example religion is vain, as the tree without fruit is vain, and fit only to be cast into the fire.

VIII

He, like Elias, Longs for Death

Tuesday, May 11th, 1915

O LORD, I want to die, and I am not sure that I am doing well in wishing it so much. Death fascinates me, life repels me. I feel I am a "poor banished child of Eve, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears," as I say every day to the Mother of Mercy. The narrowness of life oppresses me; my weakness displeases me; the petty everyday struggle wears me out. I should like to be done with it; I should like to give up the trial; I should like to be called at once to my judgment. If I look on death, I think with real relief that it is advancing towards me every minute with even step. To-day I shall have to wait for it one day less than yesterday; but when, when will it reach

me? If it might be to-morrow! How will it come? Will it be painful and excruciating? Will it be sudden, swift as lightning, or long, slow, sweet, and calm? Will it leave me time to call upon Thee, my God? Thou art silent, and I know it is well that Thou shouldst be; it is well for me and for my salvation, for I am too weak, and if I were certain of the day and hour I should be less attentive, less watchful, less cautious; such security would put vain hopes into my mind and deliver me into the hands of the enemy. But Thy terrible silence oppresses me, O Lord. I fear Thee, I tremble and I am afraid of myself. Oh, that it might come at once, now, at this instant, and abruptly stop my hand at this very word!

I HAVE interrupted my writing, concentrated my mind on Thee, O Lord, and I have said twice in utter abandonment: Take me! Take me! And now I repeat it: Here I am; take me, take me now at this moment when I love Thee, when I fear Thee, when I wait for Thee. Thou seest well that I cast not a glance at what

I leave behind, that I have detached myself from everything. I desire Thee alone, O Lord, and for Thee I would pass through any ordeal. Send me a death of agony, and torment, an atrocious, vile, opprobrious, infamous death, like Thine own. Oh, that would be too much joy for me, and I am sure I shall never be worthy of it! Let me die like St. John Chrysostom; or at least like St. Cyprian. But no, their death was a majestic triumph. The former returned from the Caucasus, thirty years after his death, and on the Bosphorus, illuminated by thousands of flames, between the shores of two continents, a young imperial and saintly couple welcomed his ship decorated with silken draperies and resplendent with lights like an altar, amid the tears and the mourning of an endless multitude of the faithful. The latter, going up to his martyrdom, heard behind him an entire people crying that they wanted to die with him. No, no, Lord, give me a painful, obscure death; make me die now, insignificant and unknown as I am; but let it be very soon, nay at once.

I DO not know if I am deceiving myself or presuming too much, — my heart is so weak and cowardly and so easily deceived and puffed up with vanity, — but it seems to me that I look upon the event of my death with absolute lack of fear. But perhaps, or rather without any doubt, I am speaking now with boasting and bravado, and if the day of real trial were to come I should show myself a pusillanimous coward.

SOMETIMES I rebuke myself for wishing to die, and suspect that I am making love for Thee a mask for my cowardice and discouragement. If Thou keepest me alive, this is among Thy designs, and I ought to serve Thee living without the intractable impatience of a restless schoolboy, and accept without a murmur even the longest, saddest, and most obscure life to ripen myself gradually with resigned and humble patience in the warm rays of Thy love. Yes, yes, let us suffer and fight with joy, all our lives, as Thou hast willed that peace should not be here, for

Jesus came not to bring peace but a sword. Blaise Pascal, in one of his letters, well says: "One must make up his mind to suffer this war all his life, for there is no peace here. Jesus Christ came not to bring peace but a sword. But, nevertheless, it must be confessed that, as the Scripture says, the wisdom of men is only foolishness before God, so one may say that this war, which seems so hard to men, is a peace in the sight of God; for this is the peace that Jesus Christ brought. However, it will not be perfect until the body shall be destroyed; and that is what makes one long for death, yet suffer life gladly for the love of Him who suffered both life and death for us, and who can give us more good things than we can ever ask or imagine, in the words of St. Paul." [1]

[1] Il faut donc se résoudre à souffrir cette guerre toute sa vie: car il n'y a point ici de paix. Jésus-Christ est venu apporter le couteau, et non pas la paix. Mais néanmoins il faut avouer que, comme l'Écriture dit que la sagesse des hommes n'est que folie devant Dieu, aussi on peut dire que cette guerre qui paraît dure aux hommes, est une paix devant Dieu: car c'est cette paix que Jésus-Christ a aussi apportée. Elle ne sera néanmoins parfaite que quand le corps sera détruit; et c'est ce qui fait sou-

AND when I expressed this desire for death to Cardinal Maffi, a few days ago, telling him that I had a scruple about it, he — enlightened and keen as he is zealous and pious — answered that death should neither be feared nor desired, but should be left to the Lord, — almost exactly what my good spiritual father had told me before.

AND yet I still persist in loving and longing for death as a liberation and a reward. Was it not St. Ambrose, that giant of the Church, who used those words that might have resounded on the lips of Elias? "O God, my Father, stretch out Thy arms to receive Thy poor servant who calls upon Thee. Ah! although faith has been spread far and wide, charity grows cold and iniquity still abounds upon the earth! O take me up with Thee where there are no such

haiter la mort, en souffrant néanmoins de bon cœur la vie pour l'amour de celui qui a souffert pour nous et la vie et la mort, et qui peut nous donner plus de biens que nous n'en pouvons ni demander ni imaginer, comme dit Saint Paul.

miseries, no such changes, no such darkness, but Thou alone art the light of Thy sons! It is hard to wait so long for the day when this our death shall be swallowed up in Thy life! It is hard to drag so long this body already wrapped in the shadows of dissolution! Arise, O Lord! Sleepest Thou? How long wilt Thou repel me?"

AND are not these the exhilarating words of St. Gregory the Great, written in the anguish of divine expectation? "What are the joyful or sad events of this world in comparison with the life that awaits us above? This earthly life, with its constant ebb and flow and disappearance of persons and things about us might well be defined as a continuous death. There is no true life but in heaven, where the spirit in company with the angels is immersed in infinite light and becomes inebriated with the possession of incorruptible, eternal happiness. O, how the heart is fired with this thought and longs for the blessed goal! Make haste and let me hear Thy call, O Lord, Thy servant turns his ear to Thee and waits."

THIS is indeed the truth, O Lord: I am not invoking death, but life, for this life is death, and the moment of bodily death is only the painful passage that leads to life. I desire death because I must pass through it in order to come to Thee, O Lord. I desire death that I may possess my good; and Thou art my good, O Lord, my love, my life, sweet Jesus, Jesus, my love. I desire death that I may truly and fully be a "fellow citizen with the saints, and a domestic of God." [1] What shall be the joy eternal, if the mere thought of it in this little, beclouded, dim mind of a pygmy groping in the dark, incapable of conceiving it, or of imagining even "a single spark of Thy glory," is enough to make me leap and bound, to set my heart throbbing, to whirl me away in a torrent of bliss and rejoicing? What shall the reality be, if the mere expectation is enough to make me happy! Oh, the goodness of the Lord! what shall life eternal be, when I shall "be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is

[1] Civis sanctorum, domesticus Dei. (Eph. ii, 19.)

the breadth, and length, and height, and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that I may be filled unto all the fullness of God"![1] My God, I read the burning words of the Apocalypse and should I not be consumed with impatience and yearning? Should I not feel my soul drawn by an all-consuming desire to see the Holy City, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, from God "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband?"[2] And should I not thirst for the water of the river of life, "clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb?"[3]

AND moreover I desire to die because I see that the wicked wish to live and are attached to life, like oysters to the rocks; they are greedy and feverish, full of

[1] Cum omnibus sanctis, quae sit latitudo et longitudo, et sublimitas et profundum: scire etiam supereminentem scientiae charitatem Christi, ut impleamini in omnem plenitudinem Dei? (*Ibid.*, iii, 18–19.)

[2] Paratam sicut sponsam ornatam viro suo. (Apo. xxi, 2.)

[3] Splendidum tamquam cristallum, procedentem de sede Dei et Agni. (*Ibid.* xxii, 1.)

anxiety and terror. They are too ridiculous and contemptible for me to wish to resemble them. To them life is an abode, and they refuse to listen to any one that says it is precarious, ephemeral, fragile, fleeting as a breath, futile as that of a fly; nay, they are ready to curse him who tells them these things, and they close their ears wildly that they may not hear. But for me life is only a voyage and, what is more, a perilous voyage. What desire more natural than to long to see the end of it at once? Why should I not stand on the prow, scanning the horizon and straining my eyes to see if the harbor be not getting nearer? The longer the voyage, the greater the danger of shipwreck and the more numerous will be the storms. It is true that the greater the trials we overcome, the greater is the reward that God has in store for us. It may be that He loves me so much that He wishes me to be more glorious in His eyes. I would not be so ungrateful as to accept with bad grace the battles to which He invites me; but I am afraid for myself, I know my weakness and my unworthi-

ness, I feel that I can do nothing on earth, and if occasionally the mirage of a vast earthly undertaking smiles before me and I seem to be called to perform many enterprises, I tremble lest this thought be suggested to me by the evil one for my perdition; I am afraid it is a diabolical, proud thought.

THEN I should like to die, especially to mortify my ambition rather than through disgust for the world and desire for peace. I should like to die because, rather than become a presumptuous empty braggart, a deluded man obstinately attempting enterprises beyond his powers, I would prefer a thousand times to be one of those unknown servants, of whom Thou didst speak to Elias, when Thou didst say to him: "And I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel whose knees have not been bent before Baal and every mouth that hath not worshiped him kissing the hands." [1] I would rather be one

[1] Et derelinquam mihi in Israel septem millia virorum, quorum genua non sunt incurvata ante Baal, et omne os quod non adoravit eum osculans manum. (3 Kings xix, 19.)

of Thy least adorers, unknown to the world and even to the prophets.

BUT while seeking these words in the third book of Kings I read the whole nineteenth chapter, and I am now asking myself with painful anxiety whether it is a warning or a temptation for me, whether it is Thy message, O Lord, or a suggestion from the devil; for Elias also was anxious for death: "He went forward one day's journey into the desert. And when he was there and sat under a juniper tree, he requested for his soul that he might die and said: It is enough for me, O Lord; take away my soul, for I am no better than my fathers." [1] And later he gave the reason twice: "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant; they have thrown down Thy altars, they have slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I alone

[1] Perrexit in desertum, viam unius diei. Cumque venisset, et sederet subter unam iuniperum, petivit animae suae ut moreretur, et ait: Sufficit mihi, Domine; tolle animam meam, neque enim melior sum quam patres mei. (*Ibid.*, 4.)

am left, and they seek my life to take it away." [1]

BUT the Lord told him he still had seven thousand unknown servants and commanded him to do what was necessary. And the angel of God had already said to him: "Arise, eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go." [2]

WHAT can I think, O Lord? I shall say: Thy will, not mine, be done. I shall say that if Thou wilt I am ready to walk forty days and forty nights, provided Thy grace will help me. But even if I have only one step to take, I need Thy grace. To get it I will arise and eat and drink; and I say that I shall not eat any food but Thee, the holy food of the flesh and blood of Blessed Jesus, the living bread from heaven, that I may be able "to walk in the strength of that food." [3]

[1] Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum, quia derelinquerunt pactum tuum filii Israel, altaria tua destruxerunt, prophetas tuos occiderunt gladio, derelictus sum ego solus, et quaerunt animam meam ut auferant eam. (*Ibid.*, 10 and 14.)

[2] Surge, comede; grandis enim tibi restat via. (*Ibid.*, 7.)

[3] Ambulare in fortitudine cibi illius. (*Ibid.*, 8.)

IX

He Realizes the Desolation of the Heart from which God Has Withdrawn

Wednesday, May 12th, 1915

O MY LORD, how good Thou art! What a sweet sadness it is for me to feel mute and powerless to express myself when I would like to praise Thy infinite goodness! And just to think that all eternity will not suffice to praise Thee and adore Thee as I desire! Thou art all joy and tenderness! Thou art all kindness and indulgence!

WHEN I woke up this morning my mind was cold and stagnant; I had a sense of desolation, and this for several reasons. Last night I wandered idly from café to restaurant in the company of some loose young fellows, and I got home late and tired; this morning I woke up in a bad humor and stupid and looked back

with regret at my happy hours at home, with the diligent, eager mornings, the short, peaceful evenings of the past few days. I was amazed at the thought that to-night I must go to Padua, called there unexpectedly, and that to-day is going to be full of petty cares, annoyances, and business. Foreseeing all this, I had made up my mind to rise even earlier than usual, but the weak idling of last evening prevented me from doing it. Cross and discontented, I was inclined to be impatient and thought I would gain a couple of hours by omitting the reading of the Gospel and the writing of these pages, especially as I felt I had nothing to say to Thee, O Lord, and did not care to make the effort to search. I had nothing to say to Thee! I could find nothing in myself! I did not find Thee, I did not love Thee! Thou wert distant and strange to me, O Lord!

HOW sad and humiliating is this aridity of soul! It is true that my sweet St. Francis de Sales has put me on my guard, warning me not to be discouraged by it; but still, how abandoned we do feel when

Thy light vanishes from our heart! I might express this state of mind in the words of the Psalmist, but no, I want to speak to Thee alone, O Lord, with my own poor words. When Thou disappearest from our heart, Thy disappearance is terrible, because it leaves nothing behind it, not even a trace or a shadow. Thou art away, distant, absent; it seems almost as if Thou dost not exist any longer. The sun hides himself behind the clouds, but his light penetrates through their veils, no matter how dense, and it is always light, however cold, wan, and dim it be. The sun sinks below the horizon, but his light remains for a long time; he heralds his return long before he reappears; he reminds us of himself with his reflection from the moon; he leaves a little of his warmth on earth; and even in the midst of a stormy moonless night, when there are not even stars to remind us of him, the sun is in our memory; we are certain he will return. But Thou, O Lord, when Thou dost vanish, it is as if Thou wert no more. An uneasiness, full of doubt, takes possession of us be-

cause every support fails. The thousand infallible certitudes of a well-rooted faith, founded upon a thousand irrefutable proofs, that bold and invincible constancy which at times would make us run smiling to meet any martyrdom with the same confidence with which we put our foot to the ground, knowing that it is perfectly solid and that it is impossible for it not to support us, all these disappear with Thee. When the proofs that reason gives us are deprived of that throb of love which makes them alive, they seem cold and dead, like the subtle arguments of a sophist, and no different from any other human arguments that are indifferent or even contrary to faith, doctrines that are neither more nor less persuasive than many others. This reminds me of that thought of Pascal: "As Jesus Christ dwelt unknown among men, so His truth dwells among ordinary opinions, without any outward differences; so also the Eucharist dwells among ordinary bread." [1]

[1] Comme Jésus-Christ est demeuré inconnu parmi les hommes, ainsi sa vérité demeure parmi les opinions communes, sans difference à l'extérieur; ainsi l'Eucharistie parmi le pain commun.

THE reason is that to love Thee is the first duty, that which includes all others, that on which all others are based, that from which all others are derived. If I do not love Thee, all is lost, all has been said and thought in vain.

SO therefore my mind was barren this morning, and now I almost bless that state of coldness, nay I thank Thee for it, O Lord, as I do for all that Thou sendest me and that I can always use to advantage. For when Thou dost abandon us, Thou makest us feel what miserable vessels of weakness, uncertainty, restlessness, and doubt we become when we are left to ourselves, without the potent help of Thy living grace; Thou makest us feel how necessary Thou art to our life.

AND behold, how Thou hast returned to me, O good and blessed Lord! When I sat down at my desk, I intended to write just a few words merely to note my sterility. But first I took up the Gospel, intending to read a few pages, and as I

was taking it out of the bookcase, my eyes traveled quickly over the backs of some religious volumes, as if mechanically searching for a theme to set down in this diary. O wretch that I am — as if I had forgotten, O Lord Jesus, that Thou art not to be found by delving in books but by examining one's own heart. So I opened the Gospel of St. Mark and I read about the Pharisees, the Syro-Phoenician woman, the man who was deaf and dumb, and so on as far as the tenth chapter, but first I kneel, bless myself and pray, as I always do, that the reading may be profitable. Here is the Lord's Prayer, there is the Angelic Salutation, here is the Gloria, here the Salve Regina, and thus I find Thee again at once without any effort, my Jesus, I find Thee again smiling and loving. I pray slowly, with reflection, with joy, and not mechanically.

IN the meantime I think vaguely that I shall be able to find a way of doing what I have to do to-day without too much worry. My imperturbable peace returns to me with my confidence, my mastery

over myself, and that certain sense of intimate security which Thy love gives me. I find myself with Thee, Jesus my love, and I say to myself that the theme for these pages has come to me of itself, — that which I mentioned just now. Then I read the chapters of the Gospel, very quietly, without impatience and without haste; I rise, I happen to lay my hand on a book which speaks of Thee, a rather frivolous and affected book, but at the same time quite gentle and tender: *La Samaritaine*, by Rostand. I dipped into it here and there, and a feeling of tenderness took possession of me. At almost every page a lump came into my throat and sweet tears rose to my eyes. Then I laid the book aside and sat down to write these pages.

TWO hours ago I could find nothing in myself, but as soon as I put pen to paper thoughts welled up in such abundance that I have scarcely had time to jot down a few of them, and have let all the others go. This is always the trouble in writing, when one has too much to say:

one winds up by saying little and that little badly and ill arranged. Two hours ago my soul was a dry, frozen desert, but since I have been writing, it is a meadow full of flowers, of warmth and perfume and light.

I LOVE Thee, O Jesus, I cannot say anything else. How good it is to love Thee, O dear Guest of my heart, sweet Jesus! How glad I am to have Thee! Why didst Thou flee from me? Oh, what a question! I should rather ask myself why I closed the portals of my soul against Thee, when it is so sweet to throw them all wide open, to open all the doors to Thee, to go and meet Thee, to greet Thee with festivity, O strong King, O King of Victories! I am happy.

I CALL to mind a little story which I read a few days ago in the book of a very learned and pious man, Father Giovanozzi, to whom I owe a great deal — (I pray Thee, with all my heart and with the gratitude of a son and disciple that Thou wilt reward him). It was during

the eclipse of 1842. "A poor boy of the village of Sièyés (Basses-Alpes) was tending his flock. Being totally ignorant of the event that was about to take place, he saw with uneasiness the sun getting gradually darker, while there was no cloud or mist to give him an explanation of the phenomenon. When the light entirely disappeared all at once, the poor boy, overcome by terror, began to cry and call for help. He was still crying, when the first rays of the sun reappeared. Reassured at that sight, the boy clasped his hands and cried out in his southern dialect: "O beou souleou!" (O beautiful Sun).

O Jesus, O beautiful Sun!

X

He Meditates on God's Indulgence to Those who Do the best they Can

PADUA, *Thursday, May 13th*, 1915

O LORD, wilt Thou be satisfied with a few hurried, sleepy words this morning? I did not sleep last night, I am very tired from the journey, and just now, while on my knees reading the Gospel, I felt my eyelids grow heavy and close and found myself betrayed into sleep, in spite of all my efforts to keep awake, so that I scarcely managed to read well the beautiful tenth and eleventh chapters of St. Mark, in which I found Thy commandment, which I shall soon obey: "And Jesus looking on him loved him, and said to him: One thing is wanting unto thee: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me."

THOUGH I am sleepy and tired I know that Thou art very indulgent and wilt forgive my physical weakness, for Thou seest well that the spirit is willing, even if the flesh is weak. Besides, the thought of Thy indulgence towards us poor little mortals is one that often gives me comfort. This morning I am a little more sleepy and physically tired than usual, but after all am I not always a sleepy, indolent, fractious, useless, and tired servant of Thine? Are not all of us ever so, even in our best moments? I believe that if we had an adequate idea of how lazy and frail we seem to Thee, O ineffable power and eternal action, infinitely ardent, loving, untiring, and solicitous, we should feel too humiliated and abashed. But Thou art also infinitely good, and I am sure Thou art satisfied with just a little good will on our part. But what can we do? We are so small, O our Father, our environment is so restricted, our mind is so obtuse, our flesh is so frail! And moreover we cannot offer Thee anything that has not already

been Thine from all eternity, O Lord, O King, O Creator, O Father, O Benefactor, O wise and beloved Master! What can we do? Praise Thee? What is our praise but a confused, maladroit, awkward stammering, full of who knows how much absurdity, incongruity, and error, lost in the gigantic whirl of the many myriads of endless worlds that sing majestically such complete and sublime praises to Thy wisdom? Do Thou make up for our misery, O Lord! What a joy for me to feel that Thou art looking down upon us, smiling and indulgent like a father! Sometimes Thou sayest: Poor children, they are doing what they can. So now Thou art not regarding my sleepy weariness but my tender trusting love. Sometimes when, in some divine service, I hear hoarse or strident voices out of time and tune, and among these the quavering accents of a dear old man, together with the shrill tones of a little boy, I am seized with a melting tenderness at the thought that Thou art there above, listening gladly and saying to Thyself: Poor little creatures, they are doing what they can.

AND all Thy angels are there beside us, exchanging happy kindly smiles. And perhaps this poor, discordant, miserable chorus of us sinners, floundering here below in the quagmire of this wretched world, this choir of poor little recruits, among the least of Thy Church militant, may be no less pleasing to Thee than the immense harmonicus chorus which the shining legions of Thy Church triumphant are raising at the foot of Thy throne.

I LEAVE Thee, therefore, for to-day, O Lord, sure of Thy forgiveness. I need to feel Thee loving and kind with me, because this morning I want to approach Thy holy Table and feed on Thy holy Body. I want to celebrate this beautiful, triumphal day of Thy Church, the Ascension. "Allelujah, Christ the Lord is ascended into heaven, come, let us adore, allelujah!"[1]

I NOTICE in the office of to-day a most apposite suggestion from Pope St. Greg-

[1] Alleluia Christum Dominum ascendentum in coelum. venite adoremus, alleluia!

ory's homily on the doubts of the apostles as to the reality of the resurrection. Their doubts, which made them so slow to surrender to the evidence, help splendidly to confirm our certainty when we read: "Mary Magdalen who believed so soon has helped me less than Thomas, who doubted so long. For he, by his doubts, touched the scars of the wounds and thus removed from our heart the wound of doubt."[1]

FINALLY, O Jesus, I remember Thy promise. "And I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth. For if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."[2]

O HOLY SPIRIT enlighten us in our misery, for we are in great need of it.

[1] Minus enim mihi Maria Maddalena praestitit, quae citius credidit, quem Thomas, qui diu dubitavit. Ille etenim, dubitando, vulnerum cicatrices tetigit, et de nostro pectore dubitationis vulnus amputavit.

[2] Ego rogabo Patrem et alium Paraclitum dabit vobis ut maneat vobiscum in aeternum, Spiritum veritatis: Si enim non abiero, Paraclitus non veniet ad vos, si autem abiero, mittam eum ad vos. (John xiv, 16–17; xvi, 7.)

XI

He Reproaches himself for Pharisaical Vainglory

FLORENCE, *Friday, May 14th*, 1915

WHILE writing yesterday, O Lord, I omitted as usual a great many things which crossed my mind at the time, and among them not the least of those necessary to understand thoroughly what I wanted to say, partly because I write too rapidly, partly because of the weakness and distraction of my mind, and partly because my enjoyment of the liberty of writing as it were at random, and without literary accuracy, leads me to be slipshod and careless. But I really want to note in passing that I have not yet learned to write well in this book, to write as St. Augustine teaches and as the pages of Gratry comment. I observe that I should write more slowly and make up for my

mental deficiency by writing little, but accurately and clearly, rather than by writing a great deal, and this strained, confused, and defective. Thy good servant, Jesus, must always be simple and tranquil, modest and slow, reflective, cautious, and attentive to detail.

I OBSERVE also that I am writing these pages with a certain amount of vainglory and hypocritical frivolity, vaguely hoping that some day they may be found, read, and admired, while in the meantime I have complacently shown them to a few persons myself to parade my learning, to arouse admiration for my devout practices, and to have myself esteemed above what I am. Detestable thought! so wicked and unworthy, so contrary to Thy teachings, O Jesus, that I almost think it would be better to give up this practice as dangerous to my weakness. In my devotion there is evident a pharisaical fondness for ostentation, poorly concealed and badly justified by a longing to convince others of my sincerity and to set an efficacious example. I preach a

great deal, not merely to convince, but also to show off my sacred learning, which in reality is very superficial, very weak, and very meager, but which seems to others rare and exceptional because of the general enormous ignorance of such matters. It would be much better for me to argue less, talk less, to pray in Church with less ostentation, not to pull out my beads in cafés, and in conversation not to tell everybody, even the indifferent, about my most intimate religious practices, not to make religion the perpetual theme of my conversation, not to inform every Tom, Dick, and Harry about my habit of writing these pages, much less flourish them in their faces with an assumed air of carelessness and simplicity, taking special pains, however, to put my finger on the Latin quotations, and so forth.[1] In this behavior of mine there is a certain infatuated levity, an ardor that is largely ingenuous and sincere, an innocent vanity without malice, but there is also ostentation, mania to be peculiar, desire to

[1] [Editor's Note. In the original text the quotations are always in Latin or French.]

attract attention and undue admiration by taking advantage of the yearning interest that religious problems kindle in all men's minds now as always, even in this age of cold, studied indifference, — manifest proof of their decisive importance for all and of the gravity and justice of the cause of God.

I PURPOSE, therefore, to be better in all ways, even in the interest of the cause I am defending, for my methods are so awkward and clumsy that they injure rather than benefit it. Ostentation and pose do not escape the notice of even the most obtuse of observers, who is always sharp enough when it comes to seeing the mote in the eyes of another rather than the beam in his own; so I may easily make myself a poor reputation as insincere, fond of singularity, a poser. Moreover I must from now on consider better that true virtue is obscure and modest, hidden from the eyes of the world, and only thus can it be profitable to itself and to souls, only thus can it be pleasing and acceptable to God.

I MUST not be among those who find their reward here, but I must put my trust in Him Who sees in secret. My left hand must not know what my right hand does. I must learn to be silent and a noiseless, attentive servant, not a gossip and a braggart; I must learn not to be vain, but to concentrate myself silently and humbly in Thy love, O Jesus.

AND now I shall defer until to-morrow what I wanted to add to the words of yesterday. But I will jot down one idea, which does not seem bad: It might, perhaps, be well to destroy these first pages that I have written, and to regard them as a mere exercise and nothing more. But we shall see later on, for, whether bad or good, they are always documents of more or less sincerity and, it seems to me, will certainly be useful in investigating and getting to know myself better. In fact the true object of my writing is to learn to listen to myself and to know myself as I am, besides loving Thee, O Lord, with a material act of constant devotion.

XII

He Discourses on the Folly of Relying too much on the Forbearance of God

Saturday, May 15th, 1915

WHAT I intended to add to the few sleepy notes I jotted down the day before yesterday, O Lord, is that while we, Thy poor children, must count much upon Thy indulgence in that little good which we do by Thy grace, we must not count too much on Thy kindness when we do wrong, for though Thou art a loving and merciful Father, ready to make up a thousand-fold for our shortcomings when we show Thee, under that penetrating glance from which nothing can be hidden, that we are sincere; yet Thou art not a weak, easygoing Father who readily condones. We are so wretchedly inefficient, so needy of Thy guidance, help, and

support, that when we do good in our own way we always do it badly, hastily, negligently, and inattentively, making many little mistakes and follies. It would be absolutely fruitless, vain, and useless, nay ridiculous and dangerous, if it were not for the necessary, indispensable succor of Thy sovereign grace.

AND yet Thou art so divinely good, O Lord, so kind, beneficent, and generous, that Thou deignest to make use of us, Thy poor, unworthy, awkward servants, as Thy free and meritorious co-workers. The very thought of Thy boundless goodness ought to intoxicate us all with love, gratitude, and confusion. In the words of St. Augustine, "The grace of God does not work alone, nor man alone, but the grace of God with man." [1] Thou hast made us, O Lord, as it were actual fellow workers with Thee, and this thought is truly staggering. It would paralyze all our strength were we not very sure of Thy goodness, knowing for certain that

[1] Nec gratia Dei sola, nec ipse solus, sed gratia Dei cum illo.

Thou art here at our side, to inspire us, to assist us, to encourage us, to guide our hands; otherwise how could we dare to stand alongside of Thee, Thou divine, infallible worker, Who deignest to call to Thy service such inefficient pygmies as we are?

IN doing good, therefore, we can count upon Thy indulgence when we are actuated by a small amount of good will. Even if we make mistakes, even if we do little, and that badly — patience! Thou seest into our hearts, Thou dost excuse us, Thou dost appreciate even the widow's mite. Thou considerest the endeavor, not the result; Thou lookest at the heart, not the act, and Thou takest good intentions into account. So our feeble chorus of uncertain, tremulous, and badly harmonized voices, which do not keep time, our slipshod Latin, crude simple words and childish music, out of tune, are no less pleasing and acceptable to Thy generous heart, O good, kind Lord, than the ineffable, infinite, harmonious, angelic choirs of paradise, which look upon Thy glory.

A POOR savage wears hanging from his neck a sardine-tin picked up empty and greasy in some explorer's abandoned camp; this box constitutes his greatest treasure; he makes a parade of it, he prizes it as dearly as his own life. Now suppose that some day this poor savage, wishing to show his affection and gratitude to the missionary father who has converted him and given him Baptism, presents that empty box to him, has the missionary a right to despise the gift? The fact that the present is worthless in the eyes of the recipient does not make it less touching and eloquent, for it has been offered by a grateful heart.

ANYTHING we can give and sacrifice to Thee, my God, will always be nothing to Thee, Who hast everything and dost not need anything, Who hast created all things and possessest all things, Who disposest of all things as best pleaseth Thee. But that which we can give Thee freely, O Lord, is our heart, and even this Thou couldst take by force any time

Thou wishest, but Thou desirest to have it from us as a free, spontaneous, unsolicited homage. This is the real gift which we can make Thee in return for Thy immense love; this is the gift most dear to Thy paternal Heart.

BUT if we must trust in Thy indulgent kindness toward the good we do, we must not place too great reliance on Thy forbearance towards evil, on the contrary we must fear Thee as a stern and inexorable Judge. Indeed, no error is more fatal, more pitiful and absurd than that which would attribute too great kindness to Thee and refuse to believe in Thy justice, because it deems this to be incompatible with Thy kindness and evidence of an angry and revengeful disposition. Yet, on the contrary, it would really be unjust if good and evil were rewarded by Thee with the same indulgence; it would be treating the good unfairly, it would be defrauding them. The mere idea of it makes one instantly think that the creation of man and of the world was absurd and useless; for that would be giving the same

value to good and evil, considering both of them as zero, abolishing the very concept of them. Thy infinite goodness is sufficiently proven by Thy readiness to forgive. For Thou receivest whomsoever turns to Thee, even though he may have fallen to the lowest depths, into extreme despair, and Thou rejoicest over one sinner who returns more than over ninety-nine who have ever been faithful. This goodness of Thine will be the real condemnation, the irrefutable accusation, the extreme confusion of the obstinate, impenitent sinner. It is just that Thou dost exact payment even to the uttermost farthing, not because evil offends Thee, but that justice be done. Making Thee overkind, O Lord, means doing away with Thy justice, therefore belittling Thee and not exalting Thee, as many believe (or rather pretend or try to make themselves believe, so as to feel more easy and to put their consciences to sleep). But this is futile. A far-seeing French writer wisely remarks in a recent book: "By relying on the infinite goodness of God, he lulled to sleep the sharpness of the reproach that

rose, in spite of all, from the depths of his conscience. He knew perfectly well that this presuming on pardon from on high was but a perverted form of complaisance in his sin. This apparent excess of faith hides a lamentable diminution of Faith — Revelation, the Scriptures, and the Church held of no account, an abandoned relaxation of all discipline and dogma. The least book of theology teaches us that relying upon the divine mercy in the very act of sinning is a sin against Hope." [1]

NO truths are so clear as this, and one must be voluntarily blind not to see them. I thank Thee, O Lord, for making it seem so clear and transparent to me. I do not want to forget for a moment, if

[1] Il endormait la vivacité du reproche qui s'élevait, malgré tout, du fond de sa conscience, en se reposant sur la bonté infinie de Dieu. Il savait bien que cette présomption du pardon d'En Haut n'est qu'une forme detournée de la complaisance dans la faute. Cet apparent excès de la Foi cache une lamentable diminution de la Foi: la Revélation, l'Écriture, l'Église tenues pour rien, un relâchement abandonné de toute discipline et de tout dogme. . . . Le moindre livre de théologie enseigne que c'est pécher contre l'espérance que s'appuyer, dans la faute même, sur la miséricorde divine.

Thou wilt help me, that while it is true that Thou art most indulgent and all merciful, it is also true that Thou art scrupulously just and severe and that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." [1]

[1] Initium sapientiae timor Domini. (Psalm x, 10.)

XIII

He Breaks forth into a Rhapsody of Holy Love

Sunday, May 16th, 1915

TO-DAY, O Lord, to my shame, I have put off writing until late, at the close of the day, instead of in the morning as I should have done. But for two days I have been very tired physically and I have not had a minute to myself since Mass, while before Mass I was at fault in staying too long in bed, reading. Yet notwithstanding the bad beginning, I can say that I have kept Thy day holy fairly well, O Lord. I heard Mass well, I assisted with great fervor at Benediction, I spoke earnestly of Thee to well-disposed persons, I brought consolation to a few hearts and joy to others.

I HAD vaguely intended to write something to-day about the seed that perishes,

but I shall keep this for another time. This evening, instead, I want to speak to Thee only of love, O Jesus, because to-day I have loved Thee much and well, at least within the limits of my slight strength and of my wretched poverty of mind. How good art Thou, O Jesus, to let us love Thee! How sweet it is to love Thee! What intoxicating joy! I have an unquenchable thirst for Thee, my good Jesus, dear Master, adorable Brother, longed-for Spouse, faithful Friend, my only protector! How all-sufficient Thou art! How Thou dost satisfy! How Thou dost give rest, life, consolation, courage, strength, O Jesus, my soul, my heart, my sweetness! O yes, yes! why should I not address to Thee these tender words of love which so often in my foolish youth I have profaned, wasted, and defiled by offering them to poor creatures, as wretched and unworthy as myself?

IF I have always used them badly, is this not a good reason why I should use them well at last? If I have so often profaned them by putting them to un-

worthy uses, is this not the best of reasons why I should try now to reconsecrate and purify them for Thee? O Lord, dear good Lord, I am Thine, all Thine, and I want to be and I shall always be Thine; I want to become imbued with Thee, to live with Thee, to die for Thee, to be born again in Thee. My only treasure, I want to love Thee forever. I love Thee, I love Thee, I cannot tell Thee how much I love Thee, how my heart throbs and beats for Thee. May Thy grace make it more so every day! And every day my love for Thee is becoming more intimate, less timid, bolder, more confident and familiar, more precise and transparent, no longer vague and clouded and intangible as in the past.

OH, those horrible days when I never thought of Thee, never, never, not even by chance — as if Thou didst not exist! Oh, what a terror! I think of them now with a shiver of horror and disgust. But how Thou didst punish me for my blindness, O Jesus, by leaving me in my abjection! My language used to be vile,

obscene, full of indecencies and of blasphemies. I had many unspeakable, degrading, dishonorable, secret vices that made me vile in my own eyes. I was filthy — my soul was saturated with filth. I was discontented with myself, irritable, malicious, slanderous, devoid of ideas. I was vain, frivolous, full of myself, proud, hasty, embittered by a cloak of rancor, trembling for my future, frightened in a thousand ways, and I was at the same time a boaster and a braggart. But to-day! From how many evils I am free, what poisonous weeds I have altogether rooted out! How happy I feel!

BUT even when I was beginning to profess some sympathy for the ideas that are to-day my joy, my salvation, my constant, eager, fervent and overpowering thought, how foolish and presumptuous I was, how sterile and utterly insincere! With what imperturbable and brazen-faced audacity I used to speak on subjects I knew nothing about, and how I used to pervert Thy luminous fertile words of love! Though I called myself a Catholic,

I was still steeped to the neck in sin; I not only did not frequent the Sacraments, but ignored them, did not even know what they meant; I did not even know what the Mass was!

AND yet, at times, how Thy love was already drawing me gently, slowly but surely, more strongly day by day, ever more distinctly! How Thou didst open my eyes little by little! How good Thou wert with me even then! And yet I was still neglecting Thee; I was still living my monotonous, disorderly life, full of contradictions and vileness, bound by the chains of my passions. But now, how much better do I feel, how full of courage and confidence! How many gifts I have already received! How many more shall I get if only I desire them! How much progress I have already made! How I see that Thou dost not promise in vain, Jesus! Thou always givest to him who asks of Thee with faith, Thou always openest to him who knocks with confidence, Thou always lettest Thyself be found by him who seeks Thee with perse-

verance and desire. Dearest Jesus, my delight, my love, sweetness of my heart!

HOW well I remember the days when I scarcely loved Thee, loved Thee rather wearily and distractedly, with timid constraint and with little desire and did not yet know how good and beautiful Thou art! And the days of last year, with their first fervor of studies, their eager desire to read, my wonderment, my insatiable curiosity, the floods of light and of truth that overwhelmed me, the certitude made every day more sound, the way of justice recognized, demonstrated, proved to me in a thousand ways! O Jesus, I should like to throw myself into Thy arms, to rest upon Thy lap like a baby and tell Thee many, many things! I should like to feel Thy gentle hand, so beneficent, so sweet, so loving and kind, caressing my hair softly and lingeringly. I should like to shed all my tears just like a little child. Thou art even now too good to me, O Lord. I feel there are superhuman joys in store for me even in this life, and then there still remains all

that eternity which I cannot even conceive. Ah, too good, too good, Thou art with us all! My God, what shall I do to love Thee enough? Make me to suffer at once, put me to the test, torture me; I wait without trembling. All, all whatsoever Thou desirest, O Lord, whensoever Thou desirest, in whatsoever way Thou desirest; I am ready, if that is the best way to show how much I love Thee.

XIV

He Philosophizes on the Seed that Perishes

Monday, May 17th, 1915

THE seed must die to give life to the plant that will bear a thousand fruits. If I am not losing myself in a maze of subtleties, as I very much fear, O Lord, a glimmering of this essential truth appeared to me a few days ago in reading my Spiritual Will, which had been returned to me from Switzerland a few months after I sent it, and without keeping a copy. Those few pages which I should like to make known to many (for the love of Thee, O Lord, and not of myself) had almost passed out of my mind, and I read them again as if they had not been written by me. What I say now is really so; those pages were not written by me except materially, as if they had been dictated to me. Whatever of my own I put into them is error; con-

fusion, disorder, imperfection, and pretentiousness, but their truth is all Thine, O Lord. So the impression which I received in reading them again was one of things absolutely extraneous to my spirit, detached from me. Before them I was nothing but a passive spectator, like anybody else that might have read them. They were ideas which I had received and gathered up and then scattered far from me, no longer mine, half dead for me.[1]

AND then I perceived that in this life, which is a continuous death, everything is so, everything dies for us, everything detaches itself and goes elsewhere, to grow and bloom and fructify on its own account. Then perhaps, some day, if we shall have deserved it, we may come to enjoy our share of our own fruits. Everything that comes from us goes away to die to us, and here below we cannot gather its fruit, for one is the sower and another is the reaper. Father and mother see their son separate himself from them to grow up and live on his own account. The act of pity, of love, of wisdom

[1] *See* Spiritual Will, p. 351.

dies for him who performs it. If he at once receive thanks and praise and honor, he is specially unfortunate, because he is among those who have already received their reward; he is among those who have plucked the unripe fruit in eagerness and haste. Imprudent haste! For the fruit is bitter and sour; it does not satisfy; it increases the hunger, and will prevent us from enjoying the real, ripe fruit which satisfies. Woe to the impatient, woe! Let us be resigned to see our seed perish. Nay, better yet, let us thank the Lord for it and rejoice if in this also His will and not ours be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Let us be glad to feel that our life is dry, barren, destitute, obscure, cold, deprived of light and freshness, hard and laborious, and given up altogether to toil, because afterwards shall come, O Lord, afterwards shall come Thy eternal spring. Yes, yes, let everything here below be death — death and sacrifice! Death to us, death to what is ours, — blood, ruin, extermination, desolation, renunciation, labor! Let the seed go down beneath the earth and rot!

SWEET death, beautiful, good, gay, gentle sister of us all! How dear thou art to him who looks upon thee with desire, loving God! Truly the clamor of these dwarfs who are afraid of thee and squabble among themselves in an effort to snatch sour fruits from one another, while at the same time, wretches that they are, they dare to laugh at us because they do not know the reason for our renunciation, is truly pitiful and sad. They think that they are enjoying themselves and living, and they are dying, dying quickly all the time. They are afraid of death, and they have death enthroned within them, inexorable. On the other hand, O Lord, how gay and cheerful and good is the labor of us who persevere in hope! It is already our happiness here below.

EVERYTHING here on earth is a seed that dies. Thou, Thyself, Jesus, wast the seed that dies, is buried and rises again to life eternal. All of us must die with Thee to live again in Thee. Thus

our bodies die to live again on the day when all the human race shall be judged. Thus the word we speak issues from us, dies for us and goes to live elsewhere. Thus the deed that we have performed is dead for us, and its fruit depends no longer on our will, for it is a part of us no more. He who believes that the uttered word, the deed performed is still his own, outrages, I think, the providence of the Lord Who decreed that memory should consist chiefly in forgetting. The man who still loves himself, who has not yet learned the great virtue of hating himself and of dying unto himself to be born again in the light of the Lord, is a man who trusts his memory, which is to say that he puts his faith in the most inconstant and untrustworthy friend there is. He believes in the constancy and reliability of remembrance, but he is deceiving himself. The thing done, whether it be good or evil, once it is done, is past and gone. Memory is a faculty that forgets. Memory is not complete and faithful, except in the presence of its objects. When the celestial light of ideas

shines upon it, he imagines that this light will never be taken away and that it will always look upon the same spectacle. Do not believe it, for when the light shall have gone, memory will grow pale, like nature when the sun is gone, for here absence means oblivion.

THIS is the truth, O Lord: Memory is faithful and perfect only in the presence of its objects. But only above, O Lord, shall we truly be in the presence of these objects when we shall be in Thy presence and shall see in Thee, inclosed and bound with love in one volume, all "ciò che per l'Universo si squaderna" (that which is manifested throughout the Universe).

THEN only will our memory be faithful and complete; nay, it will no longer be memory but direct vision and reality. Our good and our evil can never more come to life there; it is dead for us; and in this inexorable law consists the chastisement of those merry fools who go to so much pains to acquire an earthly possession, to taste a fleeting joy and procure a

mundane pleasure, for they either forget or do not understand that they kill pleasure the moment they enjoy it, and from that moment they have nothing left of that pleasure but a putrid corpse.

XV

He Meditates upon the Infinite Love of God

Tuesday, May 18th, 1915

THOU lovest me, O Lord, Thou lovest me! Ah, my God, what a happy and inspiring thought is this! Thou lovest me! I want to repeat these words again and establish well this idea, look at it closely and enjoy it, for this idea is my good, it is my salvation, it is my all. When I shall have thoroughly and distinctly established this idea in my mind, when I shall understand it as far as it is possible for my imperfect intellect to understand it, then indeed shall I be strong and invincible! I shall then fear nothing on earth; it will be impossible for me to fail. Unfortunately I do not dwell enough on the thought that Thou lovest me; it is not my constant and dominating thought, otherwise from

this moment on, I should already be enjoying the bliss of heaven, O Lord, for sin could conquer me no more, and suffering would be an occasion of joy!

THOU lovest me, omnipotent Lord, Thou, Who art everything, lovest me, who am nothing! Is it possible? Can I believe it? Yes, yes, tremble not, my soul, you not only can, but must believe it. It is indeed too much; it is an overwhelming gift, but how can you marvel at such a gift when you consider the Giver and His goodness? Rejoice, O my soul, for God loves me! Me! — so small, so weak, ephemeral, deformed, bad, perfidious, useless, inconstant! — this Lord and Creator of the boundless universe loves me with an infinite love even from all eternity.

I AM the lowest and the worst, I am less than impotent, less than incapable of doing anything, utterly evil and sinful, most ugly and most weak, unstable and manifestly contemptible, and yet I am loved, courted, and protected with untiring and most tender care by that Lord Whom

St. Augustine has called: "the highest, the best, more than powerful, more than omnipotent, supremely merciful and just, most hidden and most present, most beautiful and most strong, unchanging and incomprehensible."

AND the love He bears me is worthy of His greatness and His glory. He thinks of me as if He had no other care but my destiny; as if, in the whole expanse of this universe, I alone monopolized the faculties of His all-seeing attention; as if in all the scintillating whirl of so many gigantic worlds, in the most obscure corner of the firmament, among the myriads of stars, planets, and satellites, He had come to seek this insignificant little earth, and from among the millions of tiny creatures that are born and die every second, had singled me out, to take complete charge of me, to watch over my life at every moment. And with what tenderness He loves me!—with an ardent, sincere, and quick love, with a love, as the "Imitation" says, that is compassionate, joyous and pleasing, strong, patient, faith-

ful, wise, forbearing, which nothing will ever succeed in extinguishing or diminishing. It is a passionate and jealous love, a love that He has shown me in a thousand ways, and has proven in the most terrible, eloquent, and irrefutable manner, by suffering and sacrificing Himself for me, saving me at the price of His Blood, dying for me the death of a malefactor.

WHAT is the most raging and consuming fire of this earth in comparison with that ardent flame of love which devours the heart of my Lord for me?

Let us consider further how He speaks of His love for me, and then see what immense comfort I — wretched I! — can draw from the thought of such love.

In order to understand how jealous He is of me, I shall consider that twice He has openly said: "I am the Lord Thy God, mighty, jealous." [1] And again, "For I am the Lord Thy God, a jealous God." [2] He wants my whole heart, He wants no

[1] Ego sum Dominus Deus tuus fortis, zelotes. (Exodus xx, 5.)

[2] Ego enim sum Dominus Deus tuus; Deus aemulator. (Deut. v, 9.)

rivals, He wants me to leave everything for Him, myself, the world, mother, father, sons, wife; He wants, He demands, He expects and commands that I adore Him alone, so much does He love me! In order to understand the intensity of His love, it is sufficient that I consider for an instant the love He expects of me. "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength and with all thy mind." [1] Oh, how a God Who tells me to love Him with my whole heart, with my whole soul, with all my strength, with all my intelligence, must love me! If He Who is supremely just asks so much of me, it must be very certain that He will repay me in like manner and, since He is supremely good, He will repay me infinitely more. Yes, my God, my life, my holy sweetness, I love Thee in return; Thou returnest my poor, lukewarm, weary, inconstant love with a love that is burning, strong beyond measure, and unchange-

[1] Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo, et ex tota anima tua, et ex omnibus viribus tuis, et ex omni mente tua. (Luke x, 27.)

able. Thou also lovest me "with Thy whole heart," but Thy most Sacred Heart is such that it can beat for the whole universe and keep all its ardor intact. Thou also lovest me "with Thy whole soul," but Thy soul is eternal and boundless. Thou also lovest me "with Thy whole strength," but Thy Strength is strength indeed, for it is the unique and only strength.

BUT the Lord has told me even more clearly how He loves me, in three images which picture to me the anxiety with which He has sought me, the joy with which He has found me, and the exulting ardor with which He has run to meet me. I am indeed the foolish wandering sheep which the Good Shepherd went after until He found it: "And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing; and coming home called together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost!" [1]

[1] Et cum invenerit eam, imponit in humeros suos gaudens. Et veniens domum convocat amicos et vicinos, dicens illis: Congratulamini mihi, quia inveni ovem meam, quae perierat. (Luke xv, 5, 6.)

I am indeed the groat that rolled on the floor and into a dark corner of the house. And the Lord, does He not "light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until He find it?" [1]

AND, finally, I am the prodigal son, and this most loving Father, what has He not done for me, when I came back to tell Him, as alas was too true, that I was no longer worthy to be called His son? He had already seen me, when I was yet afar off—"and when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." [2] And He had compassion on me and on my wretchedness, though I alone was the cause of it; yet even this did not prevent Him from anticipating my act of submission, to which I was driven by my misery, thirst, and starvation. Nay, He hastened to meet me, threw His arms around my neck, and covered me with kisses:—"and was moved with com-

[1] Nonne accendit lucernam, et everrit domum, et quaerit diligenter, donec inveniat? (*Ibid.*, xv, 8.)

[2] Cum autem adhuc longe esset, vidit illum pater ipsius. (*Ibid.*, xv, 20.)

passion, and running to him fell upon his neck, and kissed him." [1]

What love! O, what love! And I had nothing to give Him in return, except a heart full of cupidity and baseness, a soul overflowing with iniquity and foulness.

[1] Et misericordia motus est, et accurrens cecidet super collum ejus, et osculatus est eum. Luke xv, 20.

GIOSUÈ BORSI

XVI

He gives himself up Wholly to the Love of God

Wednesday, May 19th, 1915

THIS, then, is the love my Lord has for me, and for this love He has hastened to look for me, has lighted the lamp, searched everywhere, come to meet me, welcomed me with a cry of joy, and has made a festival in heaven for me: "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." [1]

AND now, O Lord, what shall I do, confused as I am by this superabundant and unmerited love, which I am quite sure I shall never know how to deserve? What shall I do? And I realize that Thy good things are yet only promised to me, as is the marvelous destiny that Thou art

[1] Gaudium coram angelis Dei super uno peccatore poenitentiam agente. (Luke xv, 10.)

preparing for me. Yet the promise makes me calm, secure, and full of peace. What, then, will the reality be, if the mere promise is already the greatest of all earthly goods, a happiness which nothing can disturb, a bliss that I would not exchange for a kingdom!

MY adorable and loving Father, the thought of the love Thou hast for me ought to make me invincible and happy, exulting and overflowing with gratitude, not only now, but even if I were in the midst of the agony, the horror, the desolation, and the infamy of the most wretched human condition. If I were able to realize this love as I ought, what could make me tremble? It is the infinite love of an omnipotent spirit. There is nothing left for me to do but to second it in every way, with all my energy, with all the docility and confidence of which I am able, without the least fear or doubt, for if the Lord loves me, He desires nothing but my good; if His love is infinite, the good that He has in store for me is boundless; if His love is omnipotent, this good can

never fail, and none but I could be so blind and mad as to put any obstacle in the way of its attainment.

THE road on which the strong hand of the Lord directs me must surely be the happiest and swiftest, as He Himself has chosen it for me; no other could possibly be better, for the Lord sees all things and can do all things. If I rebel against some of His decrees, no matter how cruel they may seem to me, the fault most certainly is in me; it is I who am mistaken and short-sighted; though proud, I want to judge; though insubordinate, I do not want to obey; I am a fool denying what I know to be true, namely, that I am in the hands of a supremely good, wise, great, and merciful guide. This I know. If I attempt to escape His truth, I sink inevitably into absurdity, and become a poor, blind, wretched creature fallen into the clutches of a no less blind, brutally cruel and invincible destiny.

THEREFORE, take me, loving Father, take me; I am Thine as Thou art mine;

I am Thine, body and soul, wholly and forever. Inspire me, lead me, do with me what Thou wilt. I shall obey always. Take pity on my weakness. Thou lovest me, therefore Thou wouldst not that I should fall unwittingly; Thou wouldst not that I should be tempted beyond my strength, never wouldst Thou, my faithful Lover, my infallible Guide, my omnipotent Helper, that I fall into error.

YES, I am certain of it, Father; I feel it; Behold! Behold the moment that I have longed for until now while writing this diary; yes, O Father, Thou art speaking to me directly; my heart is filled with Thee, all at once, entirely and without effort! I feel Thee in me, Thou art speaking to me, Thou art guiding my hand and saying to me: "Courage, my beloved son, courage, for I love thee and I want thee; fear no more, hesitate no longer, cast off the last hawsers, launch forth into the sea and turn not back even for a glance."

YES, indeed, dear Father. Enough, I beseech Thee, the joy is too great, too great for me. I can stand no more. I can no longer hold the pen. Let me fall to my knees, trembling and happy, before Thee, my Father, Who art too good to me, my Father, all my good, my Lord, blessed Christ Jesus!

BOOK TWO

Propterea abundantius oportet observare nos ea quae audivimus, ne forte perfluamus. (Hebrews ii, 1.)

Therefore ought we more diligently to observe the things which we have heard, lest perhaps we should let them slip.

XVII

He Finds out what is the Real Rest for the Soul

FLORENCE, *Thursday, May 20th,* 1915

O LORD, the good Christian should begin a new life every day. To be perfect like his heavenly Father, the good Christian should not halt one moment in the way of perfection; every day, every hour, every minute he should take a step forward, without ever pausing or stepping back, almost without giving a glance at the work already accomplished; he should not even stop to take breath and regain courage, but on, on, quickly, without losing an instant. On earth, rest consists in doing good, just as in heaven it consists in enjoying God. Rest does not mean idleness, inaction, standing still, but rather recuperation, contemplation, and prayer. In labor we expend vital strength and energy; in

rest we examine ourselves, repair ourselves and recuperate; but labor and rest mean life, action, and progress. Therefore, a holy day is given to us not for enjoyment and diversion and to idle away, but that we may sanctify it. A man who idles away his time, far from being rested by it, will have to make a greater effort to return to work, for idleness does not make us quicker and more alert, but rather stupefies us and increases our laziness, and thus makes our tasks more tiresome and hard. When a man seeks after earthly pleasures, far from their satisfying him and enabling him later on to bear fatigue and privation more easily, he remains more ensnared and enslaved than ever and will find it more and more difficult and irksome to be deprived of them. Pleasure does not remove hunger, but causes hunger.

LISTEN attentively, Giosuè, for at this moment it is your Lord Himself Who is speaking and admonishing you. For rest is contemplation, recuperation, prayer. It is the forerunner of that eternal happiness in which there will be no death,

inaction, or standing still, but life and motion, active and peaceful possession, without contest, desire, or struggle; for God is life; He is always busy, and His angels are ever on the wing, getting and giving, ever singing His praises, ever adoring Him, and never do they sleep. Giosuè, that body which has been given you as a servant, which you illtreat and despise, which you are always holding responsible for your faults, though it is only a dutiful and most obedient servant to you, that body is the first to give you a good example, and to teach you what life and labor and rest really are. Whether asleep or awake, it is always alive and active. In sleep your body is no less busy than in its waking hours, probably it is even busier, for sleep repairs, renews, cleanses, revives, and restores, while the working hours dissipate, undo, err, and sometimes destroy.

BEHOLD, O blessed Lord, at this point Thou dost enlighten me with a ray of truth which I had never before quite understood, or rather that I did not

understand at all, and which I have repeated hitherto on Thy word and without intelligent conviction. (Thus, O Lord, dost Thou reward those who trust in Thee.) It is for this reason that the contemplative life is better than the active; it is for this reason that our Lord said that "Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her."[1] Yes, all the fruits of the active life will be taken away from us, and the whole world will be destroyed and annihilated. What will all the labor of Martha, who "was busy about much sewing,"[2] amount to? From Mary, however, "who, sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word,"[3] nothing shall be taken away. And yet, I used to think that Martha's claim was just when she said: "Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her therefore that she help me."[4]

[1] Maria optimam partem elegit, quae non auferetur ab ea. (Luke x, 42.)

[2] Satagebat circa frequens ministerium. (*Ibid.*, 40.)

[3] Quae, etiam sedens secus pedes Domini, audiebat verbum illius. (*Ibid.*, 39.)

[4] Domine, non est tibi curae quod soror mea reliquit me solam ministrare? dic ergo illi ut me adiuvet. (*Ibid.*, 40.)

And yet, Martha, Martha, "but one thing is necessary," [1] and, even though you may not see it, Mary does not leave you to work alone; Mary is helping you all the time, and without her you would accomplish nothing. You are the waking state, she is repose; you do many things, you are anxious about many things — are they all good? — while she does one thing only, but that one is necessary and the best of all.

WHAT would become of one who always spent and never acquired anything? What, in fact, becomes of men who work without praying? Will not mortal dizziness and weariness overtake them some day, even if they have performed for a long time the superhuman feat of always doing right? But even this is impossible without a renewal of the spiritual life, because a man very soon fulfills his few and simple social duties, after which he can say: "Master, all these things I have observed from my youth," [2]

[1] Porro unum est necessarium. (*Ibid.*, 42.)

[2] Magister, haec omnia observavi a iuventute mea. (Mark x, 20.)

and consider himself justified. But, Lord, every day should be the beginning of a new life for the good Christian; he ought not to be content with what he has already done, he ought not even to cast back at it a glance of satisfaction or regret. He ought to ponder, O Lord, over a saying of Thine which seems hard, but is divinely good: "No man putting his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." [1] "Therefore, I say to you, my eternally beloved Giosuè, that a backward glance is a delay; and I say to you again, courage, my son, delay not, go ahead, run, do not turn back, for I love you and I want you, and am waiting for you and I yearn to clasp you forever in my loving arms. Do not delay, not even for a moment!"

NOW, therefore, O Lord, that one may not stop, but renew himself continually and keep going a step ahead all the time, is it not necessary to find ever new energy

[1] Nemo mittens manum suam ad aratrum, et respiciens retro, aptus est regno Dei. (Luke ix, 62.)

and new inspirations, to discover new virtues, to become better and better acquainted with our weaknesses, to pursue and conquer them with ever-increasing fury and inexorable effort? Who shall give us this power if not Thou Who art the only power of the world? Who shall inspire us, if not Thou, Who art the only source of inspiration? "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." [1] Where shall we find the exemplar of all virtues if not in Thee, Who art virtue itself? Therefore, the primary and greatest necessity to our lives — even the sole and indispensable necessity — is to know Thee, to adore Thee and to pray to Thee. Here below Thou art our temporal repose; as up there Thou wilt be our eternal. Without Thee nothing is possible, with Thee nothing is impossible. This is why rest is necessary to every body and prayer is necessary to every soul. "Mary also sat listening to the word of the Lord."

[1] Domine, ad quem ibimus? Verba vitae aeternae habes. (John vi, 69.)

AND that, O Lord, is why Thou hast placed the Commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day ahead of the commandments which deal with our duties toward our neighbor, because without the former all the others are impossible, and from it all the others are derived, and by observing it we obtain strength to keep all those that follow. For verily I say to you, Giosuè, that those things which are necessary to one man are necessary to all men together, and after the six days of labor it is necessary that all men take their rest together on a day of communion of souls in God.

LET us proceed further. (O Lord, how many things I have yet to say to Thee! My soul is overflowing with them!) "Rest is surely necessary," says Gratry. And these are the eloquent words that he adds later on: "What, then, is rest? Rest is life recuperating and retempering itself at its sources. Rest for the body is sleep; what takes place in it, God knows. Rest for the mind and soul is prayer.

Prayer is the life of the soul, the life of the intellect and the heart recuperating and retempering itself at its source, which is God." [1]

VERY well; now consider what the human race is: it is a great united body working for its own uncertain and doubtful destiny, until the Son of man shall come to judge it. The human race is composed of an immense multitude of laborers, working to build a house. Or rather this is what the Lord created us for, and all ought to be working together harmoniously to this end, each at the post assigned to him, whether it be great or small; but instead there are some who work, others who idle, others who hinder the work of their fellows, and yet others who destroy; and so they are working amid bloody struggles, disputes and contests, tears and bitterness, sacrifices and vain undertak-

[1] Qu'est-ce donc que le repos? Le repos c'est la vie se recueillant et se retemprant dans ses sources. Le repos pour le corps c'est le sommeil; ce qui s'y passe, Dieu le sait. Le repos pour l'esprit et pour l'âme c'est la prière. La prière c'est la vie de l'âme, la vie intellectuelle et cordiale se recueillant et se retemprant dans sa course, qui est Dieu.

ings. Now of those who truly labor there are some who build and some who fetch the material. The former are Martha, the latter Mary; the former are labor, the latter rest; the former are action, the latter contemplation. What would you say if the former were to complain because the latter are not there beside them on the scaffolding stacking the bricks on each other, in the midst of the noise, the rush, the shouts and tumult of active work? If those who collect the material were to cease their quieter and less obtrusive labor, everything would soon come to a standstill for lack of material. Let them, then, go afield with their wheelbarrows to get the lime, the clay, the stone; let them work in the marble and stone quarries, let them go down into the beds of rivers to load themselves with sand and gravel; let them go to pump the good, dear, useful water, for without these materials nothing can be built, and these lacking, nothing is left to be done but to stay idle, with hands folded, saying that all is done and there is nothing else for us to do, or else, as a result of some crazy

agitation, tear down what has already been constructed, in order to begin all over again in the vain hope of doing it better, disputing with those poor workers who would like at least to save that which has been constructed, and accusing them of being enemies of novelty, fearful, timid, and reactionary. The new material that they bring us from the open field is what will permit us not to stop, and will spur us on to continue the work, building ever higher and contributing our share to this universal work, which must grow continually.

THE contemplatives, what do they do? Why, they do everything! They do the one thing necessary, for, after all, "but one thing is necessary." We are asked how is it that the world has not yet come to an end and fallen into ruin, after so many frauds, so many sins, so many struggles, so much misery; how is it that it has not already collapsed in its decomposition, its sterility, its madness and debauchery? We are asked how is it that some decadent movement has not

overturned it and hurled it into the abyss. This is due to the unknown, obscure, but no less potent and fertile work — so much the more beneficent and courageous for being performed in silence and sacrifice — of the contemplatives, of those who love God, who pray to Him, who implore Him, and so acquire goodness, love, wisdom, strength, and abnegation.

IF one give a superficial glance at the world, it seems all brutal selfishness, sarcasm, unbelief, unfruitfulness, pride, impiety, envy, violence, licentiousness, and revelry, greed for enjoyment, riches, honors, and supremacy. Why has it not yet fallen into dissolution? Because of the salt of the earth, because of those who weep, who suffer, who forgive, who renounce everything, who love God above all things and their neighbor as themselves, who turn the other cheek to him who strikes them, who give their cloak to him who brings them to judgment for their coat, who do good to their enemies, pray for their persecutors and calumniators, and in order to escape the praise

of men, do all their good works in secret.

BUT I have still too many things to say about the salt of the earth and the fruitfulness of sacrifice. Only this morning I had begun to speak of the new life, when I got lost in an idea which I intended merely to mention in passing. Or have I really gone astray? No, no, for it is Thou, O Lord, Who art guiding me, and Thou hast proven it. I let myself be led by Thee, and thus I come to Thee and am already in Thee. But Thy truth, O Lord, is infinite as Thy greatness, far above me and my ridiculous powers. I wonder about it dazed, overcome by the joy and the wonder of it, and then I end by saying:

ENOUGH, enough, my God! — and throw myself into Thy arms, trembling with love, to tell Thee that I love Thee, and can do nothing else but adore Thee, my good!

XVIII

He Reaches the Threshold of a New Life

Friday, May 21st, 1915

LABOR and rest, therefore, are two alternate phases of one and the same work, which would always be uninterrupted and increasing, if only we knew how to listen to Thee and obey Thee, O Lord. Therefore, Father, not merely every day, but every minute also, each good Christian ought to begin a new life. The road we are going is new at every step; as we climb the mountain from crag to crag, the horizon changes and broadens. The great strength but also the great sadness of our poor, dim life of trial is this necessity of always going on, never pausing, never neglecting our work for an instant, never casting a glance behind.

MONSIGNOR BOUGAUD, a good bishop of our time, has well said:

"We have seen that we are here below to create ourselves, to work at beautifying our souls. Now this beauty is never finished in this world. It must always grow. 'Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect.' We must go on from light to light, from virtue to virtue. We must never stop. When one is happy one stops; one lingers, one forgets one's self. That is why we begin with happiness, but do not remain there. God has to drive us out of it; 'Go forth, go forth,' [1] He says. Go on, advance, get away from what is holding you back. Do not halt on the way. God has commanded us to keep on going, says Bossuet, in such a way that He has not even allowed us to come to a standstill in eternity."

AND yet, O Lord, it would be outraging that very sensibility Thou hast

[1] The Lord said to Abram: Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land I shall show thee. (Gen. xii, 1.)

placed in our heart, it would be like despising and misunderstanding one of Thy most precious gifts, to say that this road along which Thou dost constrain us to go is only a path of joy, of happiness, of glory and triumph. Oh, this struggle that makes us worthy of Thee is mortally sad and bitter; it is a struggle that matures us, but at the same time it wearies and enervates us. Our path is strewn with tears and blood; for us also it is the way of the cross, the ascent of Mount Calvary.

I THOUGHT of this yesterday and the day before yesterday, when I felt that a chapter of my life was about to close, and not without grief.

I OPENED this new diary as I began a new series of days, on the very day that my country was commencing a new era. I feel that I have advanced a step towards eternal life, but I cannot be blamed if I feel with profound melancholy how futile and fleeting is our life, when measured by time. I have no regrets, as Thou well knowest, O Lord, but at the same time I

feel very sad. Ever since I was left alone down to the day before yesterday, he who is gone has been my friend, the comrade of all my misfortunes and afflictions. I have loved him, I have helped him and been faithful to him; we have mutually sustained and enlightened each other and by Thy grace he has done me good beyond my expectation. I believe in his uprightness and goodness, I am certain of his keen, clear, and penetrating intelligence. O Lord, if Thou lovest him to the extent of lavishing upon him so many beautiful gifts, why dost Thou not give him the greatest of all?

I HOPE that Thou wilt enlighten him and that Thou wilt grant me this special grace that, above all, my example may be worth something to him. I hope that we may meet each other often here on earth, or even for as long as we live; but I hope especially and with all the ardor of my soul that we shall ascend on high together, like two brothers, blessed by the Father, rejoicing in His glory, after having devoted all our earthly strength

to His service. O Father, dear Father, what joy Thou art preparing for us with Thy love! And we, on our part, what are we doing? Here I am wistfully looking back to days of bitter struggle and subtle laziness, to evenings of frivolous pleasure and gaiety, to nights of calm dispute, to those poor girls who were in darkness and error, and thinking of that dear boy whom I should like to save. O Lord, help me more and more as I become more lonely. Do not fail me, do not abandon me. Help Thou my weakness, of which Thou hast seen so many of the strayings in these latter days, for in my new life I shall need, above all, strength, alacrity, readiness, and fearless courage. Give me, O Lord, Thou Who art all-powerful, the watchful strength of a good servant. "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped." "Teach me the way wherein I am to walk."

XIX

He Delights in Anticipation of Holy Communion

Saturday, May 22d, 1915

TO–DAY I went to confession, and to-morrow, O Lord, I shall receive Thee in Holy Communion with love that equals my unworthiness. When Thou dost deign to offer me Thy living flesh as food, I will thank Thee, O Lord, for having ascended into heaven to pray the Father to send Thy Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, that Thy church might be born and live and triumph for my particular salvation. Thou hast said: "And I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete." [1] Commenting on these words, St. Augustine writes in the homily found in the office of this glorious vigil: "When He says: I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete,

[1] Et ego rogabo Patrem, et alium Paraclitum dabit vobis. (John xiv, 16.)

He shows that He Himself is a Paraclete. For a Paraclete in Latin means advocate and it is written of Christ — 'we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.'"

XX

He Explains why he Holds Aloof from Agitation

Sunday, May 23d, 1915

ALTHOUGH the events of these days [1] fill the world with uproar, I have always felt a certain repugnance at speaking of them in this diary, O Lord, because this is my spiritual hermitage and I do not like even the confused echoes of the great clamors of the passing world to reach it. Here I want to come as "from time to eternity," and I do not think this desire is idle and selfish, since, if I seek to keep away from the world, I do it in order to approach mankind with a tenderer and profounder affection. He who loves the world loves himself, while he who loves mankind loves God.

[1] Those in which Italy was entering the war.

DURING the last days of our life together — though so different! — my friend who has gone and who is already in the army at the foot of the great Alps used to reproach me for not reading the newspapers, for not engaging in polemic writings, for not taking part in street uprisings, and for this he held me a contemptible coward, a poor citizen, an inept and futile patriot. And all the others agreed with him, and stopped me speaking, and predicted that some day I would feel the bitterness, regret, remorse, and even the shame of not having done anything useful for my country, of not having contributed in the slightest to the realization of the common dream. I answered quietly that every man has his duties, that agitation is not always good, that I was not convinced of the efficacy of violence, that I was not so rash, reckless, and presumptuous as to give my opinion on matters about which I could not know; that it was for others to deliberate, and for us to obey; that our agitations were superfluous or harmful, and we should leave that sort of thing

to the rowdy mob, — to foolhardy, fatuous persons who are ready at a moment's notice with snap judgments and a display of impromptu expertness.

MY opponents replied that even the smallest voice may be efficacious, that it is a crime to isolate one's self from the world, that the world would come to an end if everybody reasoned like me; but all to no avail. I felt the falsity of those arguments; I divined it more than I understood it. I felt that discipline and sense of duty in all would be the salvation and not the ruin of the world. I perceived intuitively that reluctance to isolate one's self from the world means being its slave and letting one's self be carried away by it, rather than dominating and leading it. It is certain that every individual has his share of responsibility in the progress of humanity, but in a far different sense from that in which it is generally understood. Everybody wants to command a little, to impose his will somewhat, or even his caprice, but nobody means to stay quiet and sacrifice himself for the

common good. Everybody brings to it his own little portion of pride, of imperious presumption and of vanity; everybody judges in his own way and wants to impose his own will; nobody brings to it a spirit of submission, of humility, and of discipline, the silence of his own loving, timorous, modest soul. Each man in the world must be only a humble, cheerful servant or an intractable, furious slave; and such were my friends in their mania for agitation, although they would not admit it. But they felt it in their hearts, as I observed from a certain uneasiness and acrimony in their arguments with me, even in their apparent good nature and serenity. I felt that their agitation was a desire of conquest for conquest's sake, that it was ambition and violence, craving for supremacy, not a love of the Supreme Good, not a love of Thee, my sweet Lord. They do not know that Thou hast taught: "Trust in the Lord and do good, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches. Delight in the Lord and He will give thee the requests of thy heart. Commit thy way to the Lord

and trust in Him; and He will do it." [1] And finally the great truth: "But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace." [2]

BUT to-morrow morning I will tell what this tumult of great events has made me think, Lord. I have been confused and lazy in my writing this evening; I have not listened to Thee as I should have done, and it seems to me that I have only just casually touched the surface of some great truth, of which I have caught a confused and misty glimpse. I must resume the recently neglected habit of rising early for this work. To-day, however, I have been distracted by the holiday rather than by laziness. It has been a happy day, O Lord, which I did not deserve at all; a day in which Thou hast filled me to overflowing with Thy loving kindness and I have repaid Thee with my negli-

[1] Spera in domino, et fac bonitatem, et inhabita terram, et pasceris in divitiis ejus. Delectare in domino, et dabit tibi petitiones cordis tui. Revela domino viam tuam, et spera in eo: et ipse faciet. (Ps. xxxvi, 3–5.)

[2] Mansueti autem haereditabunt terram, et delectabuntur in multitudine pacis. (*Ibid.*, 11.)

gence. How long will my ineptitude and poverty of spirit last? How long Thy overindulgence and forbearance towards me? But Thou seest my heart, good God, great God, supreme God, merciful God, and well Thou seest that I have no illusions about myself, and that I know well that I deserve nothing but Thy most terrible wrath.

XXI

He Reproves himself for his Pharisaical Aloofness

Monday, May 24th, 1915

BUT no, I shall not speak this morning about the great events that are taking place, for I feel that I should be wrong. Lord, Thou knowest how I should speak of them: with bad humor, bitterness, and even pride; forgive me, therefore, O Lord, after judging the sincerity of my contrition. As is my duty, I derive meanwhile from my mistake a lesson that shall bear fruit; he who withdraws from the world must do it with love, — not through hatred, impatience, and contempt. Not his mouth alone must be silent, but his heart also, — above all to the voices of passion, abuse, and bitterness. He who shuts himself up in silence and solitude because he blames the world and does not

wish to follow it may make this decision for one of two reasons: Either he withdraws because he does not want to sin, and therefore does it through humility and love towards God, in which case he does right; or he withdraws disdainfully and haughtily because he despairs of bending the world to his will, in which case he sins and his heart remains in the world. His solitude will be continuous exasperation and bitter rankling. He has judged himself just and misunderstood; thus he is guilty of pride; he has deemed himself necessary to the salvation of men, and he will accuse them of blindness and ingratitude; thus he is guilty of the most stupid presumption. For man's first duty should be to consider himself unjust, full of a multitude of errors and meannesses, and to feel that he is utterly useless.

SO, yesterday, when I felt a sense of resentment at the thought of those festive, applauding multitudes, with those haranguing men, those flags and hymns, it was the devil that was tempting me. When I was praising myself for having

stayed at home in meditation and prayer, far from the roar and babel of the streets, I was committing the sin of pride and taking a pharisaic pleasure in my virtue.

THAT is the reason, O Lord, why yesterday I felt so sterile, so lacking in fervor and love. Thank thee, O Lord, for returning to this poor, blind, miserable servant of Thine. And still I persist in thinking myself something! Ah, to conquer this enemy, to subdue him once and for all, I who make so much of my virtue, I who think myself worthy of praise for my sacrifices, I who display them before all, I who glory in them before myself and before Thee, O Lord, I who look upon other men with mingled pity and contempt! O Lord, Lord, I am indeed a foolishly and ridiculously vain man, and surely that poor, licentious, drunken gambler, to whom I speak every day with a smile of benign self-sufficiency, is far worthier than I. Yes, yes, I am indeed the Pharisee who prays within himself thus: "O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, and

adulterers," [1] and who does not return justified. Instead, I ought to be like the publican who stood afar off, who would not even raise his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast, saying: "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Ah, wretch that I am, how well I see my misery! Now I perceive how much delirium and baseness there is in the pages I have filled down to the present day — impious, sacrilegious, full of infamous self-complacence, they are.

JESUS, O Jesus, keep my eyes always open as they are now, so I can see my misery. One day, the ninth, I wrote, as if they were good, the Pharisee's very words: "Indeed, O Lord, I thank Thee that Thou hast not left me among these fools." Fool that I am to imagine myself worthier than the lowest scoundrel on earth. Fool that I am to have believed that I enjoyed a special grace from Thee, stupidly forgetting that Thou art the Father of all, and that Thou lovest all

[1] Deus gratias ago tibi, quia non sum sicut ceteri hominum, raptores, injusti, adulteri. (Luke xviii, 11.)

alike. Here I am always infatuated with myself, flattering myself that I am discovering sublime and recondite truths, which, instead, are simple and eternal truths, easy because they are Thine, O Jesus, because they are those that Thou hast revealed to babes, concealing them from the wise and learned. And I am a fool, O Lord, especially because I seek the judgment of men instead of Thine. I must remember that even in the most silent of men the heart may be full of the most impious, infamous, and foul crimes before God; that the solitary proud man injures not himself alone, but also all his brethren, with his disdainful, spiteful silence. And a man may be pointed out by everybody for his virtue, praised and exalted by all, he may be continent, of good morals, affable, austere, and yet his soul may be a black sink of iniquity and wickedness and a whited sepulchre.

XXII

He Analyzes his Vanity and Sees the Fruitlessness Thereof

Tuesday, May 25th, 1915

LORD, since I have succeeded, through my good fortune and the assistance of Thy benign grace, in discovering in myself that hideous, deeply rooted sin of foolish pride, I want to dwell upon it and contemplate it in all its crookedness, in order that I may feel thoroughly the horror and repugnance of it and understand to what danger it may expose me. For, when I consider that only a few days ago I was deluding myself with the idea that I was already far advanced on the path of righteousness and telling myself that, having conquered the sins of lust and sloth, nothing remained but to overcome a few petty faults and venial defects, I really cannot repress a smile of scorn and pity, a feeling of com-

miseration and indignation, at the spectacle of my presumption.

WHAT a trial, O Lord, this day of agitation and bitterness, in which I have felt so oppressed, discouraged, and irritable, so full of dull rancor against myself and impatience against others, that I almost lost my temper with my mother, besieged as I was by a whirlwind of vile thoughts! Poor wretch, what am I without Thee, my God? How corrupt and prone to evil I am, how subject to error and transgression! What will become of me if Thou dost abandon me? Ah, Lord, let me feel thoroughly my weakness and my poverty; make me to know my uselessness, my vanity, my ineptitude, so that I may desire nothing but Thy help, and realize how indispensable it is to me! For I am puffed up with vanity, I am insulting and intolerant, incapable of sympathy, indulgence, benevolence, or dignity.

WHAT chiefly attracted me to love the moral and dogmatic doctrines of the

Catholic Church was not the palpitating, divine love wherewith it is pervaded, but the powerful, invincible rigor of its logic. I grasped this as one grasps an infallible weapon. I educated myself on the writings of Pascal and Manzoni, two apologists who are great for the keen acumen of their somewhat sarcastic reasoning, both formidable dialecticians and rigid moralists, in whom I admired the strength of champion swordsmen and an irresistible polemic vigor. I continued in this study in order to possess myself of that strength, through a desire to conquer and overcome, through a craving for superiority, and I have always made an ostentatious display of my poor learning in idle, enervating, useless, exasperating, bitter discussions.

I HAVE wasted my time, and succeeded only in convincing most people that I was a dry and insincere braggart, crazy to display my talent, my learning, my courage and dialectic keenness. Before each man I took the attitude not of a friend but of an antagonist; I had no other desire but to humiliate him, to make him aware of

his folly and ignorance, and reduce him to silence. Into those idle skirmishes I brought no charity, no really loving and benevolent Christian solicitude, but always presumption, ambition, pretentiousness, conceit, and always pride. And I was punished by encountering incredulity, contempt, mediocre objections, counter-thrusts of easy commonsense; and never any one who would lay down his arms or show himself in the least moved and convinced. For men have a sort of coarse instinct which protects them against those who seek to surprise them with doctrinal and dialectic displays. They are diffident and close themselves up in themselves. Men are conquered only by love and kindness, by quiet, discreet example, which does not humiliate them and does not constrain them to give in. They dislike to be attacked by the man who has no other desire but to overcome them.

WORSE still it was for me when I met keener and more cultivated intellects, who repeated to me with a certain elegance the usual, eternal, secular objections which

incredulity has always opposed to faith. Then the skirmish became an academic debate — words, words, words! Ah, what misery! And what danger for me! For I became more and more irritated and exasperated; it seemed to me that I was in a world of blind men, where I alone saw clearly. My presumption became monstrous, my intolerance impious and foul. I deemed myself the voice crying in the desert, the savior of the universe, the only prophet called into the world to make it over from top to bottom.

MY Lord God, where would that wicked, fruitless agitation of mine have led me? I tremble with horror at the thought of it. Ah, what a plague! How sick I am! What shall I do to be healed, O Lord? Lord, have pity on me, I beseech Thee, succor my misery, for Thou alone canst help me. To Thee alone, my Salvation, I sigh, I cry, I weep. And thou, holy Virgin, dear sweet Mother of the Lord, "health of the sick, refuge of sinners, comforter of the afflicted," turn thine eyes to me, for I am so afflicted, I

am such a sinner and so infirm, and thou art so humble and sweet, so gentle and merciful; therefore intercede for me with thy divine Son, Whom I have angered. He denies thee nothing, advocate of all men, for thou art the Queen of Paradise. Pray for me, Holy Mary, blessed Lady, and tell Him to open my eyes always, that I may see myself as I am, in all my wretchedness.

XXIII

He Reproves himself for an Ill-spent Day

Wednesday, May 26th, 1915

WHY not be sincere? Lord, I have put off writing until very late this evening, and I should now have to write, not only in haste but also against my will. I did not read the Scriptures as usual this morning. I passed the day in sluggish idleness, depressed, irritable, and with a slight headache. Furthermore, I stirred up old souvenirs of my wretched life of sin; and that did me harm. I should have liked to continue to write on the same subject, but I cannot and do not want to. I hope it will pass away. Ah, Lord, Lord, take pity on me!

XXIV

He Consigns to the Flames all the Writings of his Pagan Youth

Thursday, May 27th, 1915

BEFORE I resume the discourse of the day before yesterday, I must record something that took place to-day, in order to acknowledge once more, my God, Thy infinite goodness and my extreme ineptitude, baseness, and ingratitude.

FACING the probability of going to war, I decided to rearrange and destroy many old papers of mine, testimony of my infamous life of sin. It took me the entire morning and a good part of the afternoon to consign those unworthy papers to the fire, and I am glad I was able to do it without regret and without pleasure in the evil done. Of my own writings alone there was material enough for several

printed volumes, and the thought of all the precious time that Thou hadst given me to serve and adore Thee, Lord, and that I, instead, squandered so wickedly, made my blood run cold with terror. For, when I think that Thou wilt demand an accounting for even a single idle word, what will this be for me, who have used so many words that were worse than idle, being wicked and venomous, corrupt and corrupting? Were I to put together all that my hand has written fruitlessly until now, among which I should have to include many scattered letters, many works begun and cast aside, many useless attempts and vain regrets, I could gather enough matter for a hundred thick volumes, a whole library. And it would be a library of obscenities, indecencies, blasphemies, falsehoods, sacrileges, frivolities, calumnies, anger, vanity, braggadocio, fits of mad and insensate pride.

THIS is the evil I have done up to the present. And good deeds, none. My God, it is horrifying! Ah, if Thy exceeding kindness and patience did not spare

me the chastisement I deserve, O Lord, the least I could fear would be to be stricken here and now by the thunderbolts of Thy wrath, to be reduced to ashes and then to pass myriads of years in intolerable sufferings before I could dare to raise my eyes to Thee. And what melancholy in all those vain little words, wherein I took so much pleasure, whereof I boasted and which I showed to everybody as trophies! I was lying and feeding myself with lies; I was building my happiness on smoke, and the smoke has vanished. Where has that happiness gone? How far away is everything now! How completely dead! And I was infatuated with that nothingness! May I not say that I am like the beggar whom St. Augustine, in the sixth book of his Confessions, tells of meeting in an alley at Milan, drunk and hilarious? Certainly in my scandalous precocity and my abject licentiousness I was no worthier, doubtless I was worth far less, than that poor carousing, incontinent mendicant. Ah, vile wretch that I am! What harm that muddy boiling over of sins in my younger days has done

to me! I still suffer from periods of ill-humor and oppression on account of it, fits of bad thoughts, mental awkwardness, guilty dwellings on foul images; all this through having lost and profaned my purity at the beginning of my life as a man.

BUT oh, how good, Lord, how good Thou hast been to me! I acknowledge it, and I feel almost like weeping when I discern so many proofs of Thy foreseeing, urgent, solicitous, untiring kindness. While I was going astray, Thou wast watching over me; while I was offending and forgetting Thee, Thou wast planning my salvation; while I was fleeing from Thee, Thou wast there beside me to bring me back again, watchful, attentive, loving, like a father, ready to seize me with a resolute and powerful arm, whenever I approached too close to the brink of the precipice. Through what ways did Thy providence keep me safe, always far-sighted, with never a particle of weariness, of anger, of impatience! O good Lord, adoring Thee for all eternity will be little enough for me to express my

gratitude to Thee. Yes, yes, Father, I recognize Thy invincible love, I recognize Thy kindness, I see Thy designs, I see the sublime wisdom of all Thy decrees; I realize that without Thee I should have been lost a thousand times and would have carried down with me hundreds of poor, ignorant, innocent creatures.

WHAT obstacles Thou hast interposed between me and the pleasures in which I should have been lost! Sometimes material obstacles, sometimes mutual weariness, now misunderstandings, difficulties, annoyances, always so that the pleasure might hold some disillusion or disgust in store for me; never, for some reason or other, a perfect pleasure, so that its vanity might be quite evident to me. But I, alas, was so perverse that even that imperfect pleasure would have contented me; then, just when Thou didst see that I was on the point of remaining forever a slave of vice, and that, left to myself, I should be lost irretrievably, then the blows of misfortune fell upon me. Lord, Thou hast deigned to remem-

ber me and hast stricken me repeatedly and terribly with a steady hand; Thou hast made me weep, Thou hast humiliated me, compelled me to walk and fastened weights to my feet that my steps might be painful and constrained. Every time Thou didst see me about to fall or even fallen, then Thou didst visit me with new blows and more terrible tortures. Thank Thee, thank Thee, O Lord. Now I see that thus Thou hast saved me. When I deemed Thee cruel Thou wast infinitely kind. So I bethought myself of Thee, thus I hoped in Thee, thus was I able to approach again to Thy grace. Ah Lord, affliction is truly Thine ally. And while Thou wast striking me, in how many different ways hast Thou made me able to bear the violence of the blow that was necessary to my salvation! How well Thou hast taken the measure of the debility of my poor strength, with a thousand consolations, a thousand caresses! All that Thou hast taken from me, Thou canst return whenever it shall please Thee, O Lord, and in the meantime I can say that I am saved.

NOW, when I compare myself with the wretched pygmy, the poor ridiculous creature that I was in the pages I burned this morning, I see not only the immense progress that I have made in the way of perfection, but I see besides that it was Thy infinite goodness, my Lord, that made me walk therein, almost without my being aware of it, even while I resisted in a thousand ways. From what I was, I see what I might have been; and I can scarcely restrain a cry of horror at the thought of the dangers I have avoided. From what I am, I see Thy goodness, O Lord, and I see also a luminous proof of Thy omnipotence, in that, despite all my resistance Thou couldst bring forth something good from that utterly worthless nonentity that is I.

THIS morning, while the roaring flames were devouring those pages, while I was poking that heap of burning papers about so that they would burn better, I felt my face scorched by the flame, and I thought of the unbearable heat wherein some day,

if it please Thee, O Lord, I shall purge myself of my sins. Then I shall no more be able to sin, and I shall sing Thy praises in the fire, and amid those unspeakable agonies shall have a foretaste of the joy of Thy glory. May that day come soon, O Lord, for I desire nothing but to erase and atone in some way for all my horrible sins!

XXV

He Finds that his Faith is of the Intellect and not of the Heart

Friday, May 28th, 1915

THERE is yet another danger, O Lord, into which I should not like to fall — the danger of railing at myself through pride, as if, by a display of stern and impartial austerity, to persuade myself that I have no favoritism — even for myself, thus acquiring the right to be severe towards others, after thoroughly proving that I can be severe and fierce toward myself. No, I will try — always with the help of Thy grace, my God — to be as affectionate and gentle towards myself as I would be towards another; I will not heap contumely and insults upon myself nor degrade myself too much, nor despair of my salvation. Though of myself I am worth nothing at

all, I will not be so ungrateful as to forget that Thou, Omnipotent Lord, dost love and protect me, dost watch over me and consider me so precious that Thou didst not disdain to suffer calumny, torture, martyrdom, insult, a cruel death, for my sake, and in order to save me. My soul, like that of my fellows, is immortal and has been ransomed with Thy precious Blood. Unworthy and guilty as it is, it deserves all my tenderest and most solicitous regard. Therefore, O Lord, if I insist on accusing myself, I desire to do it, not through vainglory or pride, or to make myself seem better, but through sincere concern for my true welfare, through a real and well-grounded conviction of the wrongs that I have done, so that I may discern them better, acknowledge them with humility, learn to mistrust them and to strive earnestly to rid myself of them forever, with Thy divine assistance. I do not forget that unctuously humbling himself, proclaiming himself guilty of every iniquity, striking his breast and prostrating himself, was Tartuffe's most efficacious weapon when he

wanted to deceive Orgon; but, fortunately for me, Thou seest my heart, O Lord, and Thou canst judge if there be the least trace of imposture and hypocrisy in me.

I WAS saying, then, that Faith attracted me in the beginning, more by its power than by its love. I admired it before I loved it; it appeared to me true before it appeared good, and I was quicker to admire its truth than to love its goodness. A bad road; faith entered me by way of the mind rather than the heart. My mind is now fully conquered and persuaded of it, but I feel that this will not suffice me, unless the heart embrace it with passion. Let us see why the wrong road was taken and how my perversity and pride made me so short-sighted and led me so close to ruin.

UPON reading Manzoni's "La Morale Cattolica" I admired its rigorous logic, and saw clearly that its strength was derived from the foundations on which it was based. That strength pleased me, and I wanted to make myself master of

it so that I too might be able to handle it dextrously. I had a foretaste of the joy of quoting the Scriptures, Tertullian, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, of recalling the words of Bossuet, Pascal, Massillon, of denouncing Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, of pointing out the historical errors of Renan, of Strauss, of Reville, of Loisy, of Reinach; but I never for a moment thought that being convinced of the truths of the faith obliged me to give up women and laziness, to frequent the Sacraments, to become kind and charitable, to forgive my enemies, to renounce the world and its pomps. I admired in Manzoni not his piety and charity, but his imperturbable calmness, his subtle irony, his daring, his ability, his sound, sure, elegant doctrine. I saw with pleasure how superior Christian morality was to that of pagans; but only because it made me able to boast that I could see more clearly than Plato and Aristotle, and for the joy it gave me to discover the sophistries and errors of Trajan, Cato, Brutus, Fabricius. In a word, it was pride, always pride.

IN Manzoni's prose I thought I could detect a fine irony, well dissimulated under great courtesy, and I liked to picture to my mind his adversary routed by that serene and modest air. I perceived the mark of superior power more than that of charitable benevolence; it seemed to me that Manzoni, without ever expressly saying so, was amusing himself by convicting Sismondi now of ignorance, now of trifling, now of confusion and, finally, of bad faith. Thus a feeling of contempt for the impious, the incredulous, the infidels and heretics began to spring up in me, and this increased when I read Pascal. Such a phrase as: "Truly it is a glory for Religion to have as its enemies such unreasonable men," filled me with joy and seemed to me like a condemnation. I read and re-read with delight that letter in "Les Provinciales" in which Pascal proves his right to laugh at the errors of his adversaries, so odious for their impiety and so absurd for their impertinence; and I committed to memory the words: "I will laugh in your de-

struction and will mock," [1] and those others: "The just shall see and fear and shall laugh at him," [2] that I might be able to repeat them to everybody, and have the pleasure of letting the whole universe know that some day the Lord and I would laugh at them all. From that day my ailment grew ever worse. I did not read religious books except to train myself to sustain disputations. Convinced as I was of the practical and rational utility of the Sacraments, and without thinking, or thinking very little, of the supernatural efficacy of their grace, I resolved to approach them again in order not to be caught contradicting myself, and for the pleasure of telling about it to others. Fortunately, O Lord, Thou knowest how to turn even evil into good, and although I approached the Sacraments with such vain sentiments and made so bad a use of them, still I derived many unhoped-for and unforeseen advantages from them, and I firmly

[1] In interitu vestro ridebo et subsannabo. (Prov. i, 26.)

[2] Videbunt justi et timebunt et super eum ridebunt. (Ps. li, 8.)

believe that I found in them my best medicine, slow but sure. I postpone until to-morrow the continuation of these rambling and disjointed considerations.

XXVI

He Applies St. James's Text to what he Thought Was his Wisdom

Saturday, May 29th, 1915

ALTHOUGH, O Lord, Thou hadst begun to conquer me, and I already tasted some of the infinite, delicious joys of possessing Thee, my condition was still not unlike that of the drunkard to whom St. Augustine compared himself. Or rather, as the Saint says: "For it was not a question of placing myself ahead of him on account of my being more learned, as from this I derived no comfort, but because with my learning I wanted to please men, not to instruct them, but only to have them call me clever." What I knew (very little it was and uncertain after all) made me only arrogant and vainglorious and, without improving me in the least, rendered me

even more stubborn, harsh and intolerant toward others; it planted in my heart that bitter jealousy and contentious spirit which St. James reproves as evil wisdom. Ah, Lord, how the terrible, warning voice of the apostle thunders to the very depths of my soul: "For this is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy and every evil work." [1] Mine is not wisdom from above, for in it there is not to be found one of those inimitable traits which this bears as countersigns: it is not "chaste," on the contrary, it is full of impurities; it is not "peaceful," but litigious; it is not "modest," but vain and indiscreet; it is not "consenting to the good," but intolerant, stubborn, and unconciliatory; it is not "full of mercy," but rather choleric and hard and pitiless; it is not "full of good fruits," for when I look into my soul, I find it dried up, unproductive, barren, and when I look at

[1] Non est enim ista sapientia desursum descendens; sed terrena, animalis, diabolica. Ubi enim zelus et contentio, ibi inconstantia et omne opus pravum. (Epistle of St. James, iii, 15, 16.)

my influence upon other men, I must admit that with all my mania for preaching and making proselytes and setting myself up as an example, a supreme model of all the cardinal and theological virtues, I have not yet found a dog that would listen to me. Finally, my wisdom is not "without judging"; it is anything but impartial, and its worst stain is the desire to judge and condemn everything; and it is also very far from being "without dissimulation," since its object and real aim is to make myself seem better than I am.

HERE are the two best proofs of my wrong: First, malevolence against the impious, the erring, infidels, heretics, and unbelievers. Convinced that the only salvation consists in formal profession of the faith, here I have been seeking depraved tendencies, moral crookedness, mental obliquity in everybody else, in order to prove the sad consequences of this lack of faith; a search made without love, but with malicious curiosity, as if I alone could not err, and as if God had ever given to a man the ability and the

means to sit in unappealable judgment, not only on the secret conscience of another, but even to discern the hidden play of his passions, while on the contrary, He enjoins us, as a precept, never to judge, that we may not usurp His most inalienable prerogative by an act of monstrous pride.

SECOND proof: the vanity of my virtues, origin of my inevitable perdition if, with the Lord's assistance, I shall fail to apply a remedy.

XXVII

He Continues the Searching Analysis of his Vaunted Virtues

Sunday, May 30th, 1915

AND yet who should know better than I, O Lord, that making a boast of virtue is the surest way to abjure and efface it altogether? Who should know better than I that making a boast of one's merits before Thee, the Giver of them, is the most stupid and ridiculous of all impostures, the worst kind of blindness? Is not what St. Paul said to the Corinthians said also for me? "For who distinguisheth thee? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"[1] And he had every reason to admonish thus after having said:

[1] Quis enim te discernit? Quid autem habes, quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti quid gloriaris quasi non acceperis? (1 Cor. iv, 7.)

"but neither do I judge my own self."[1] And even if Thou hast given me a treasure, O Lord, I must always remember, trembling, that I am a very fragile vessel of clay, like all my companions in exile, "that the excellency may be the power of God and not of us."[2] Whatever good there may be in me is a gift of Thy grace, and I should never regard it as a special distinction from Thee, but rather as a graver responsibility for me. And yet, can I consider myself "full," can I boast of being "rich"?[3] Alas, O Lord, perhaps the very virtues of which I am so proud, which I think to display as tacit reproaches before the world, with which I would confound men and fill them with shame, are nothing but Thy gifts squandered and perverted! The ardent desire to unfold Thy Word has been transformed in me into a desire to please men. Love of simplicity and poverty has degenerated into a repugnance for worldly troubles and an excuse for my sloth.

[1] Sed neque meipsum judico. (*Ibid.*, 3.)

[2] Ut sublimitas sit virtutis Dei, et non ex nobis. (2 Cor. iv, 7.)

[3] 1 Corinthians, iv, 8.

I SEE clearly, O Lord, that whatever I touch is spoiled in my hands and that I am inclined and ready to turn even the instruments of my salvation into instruments for my perdition. Even the morbid and diffident scrupulousness which I bore for some time to the tribunal of penance, and which my spiritual father so energetically fought, was not this also a proof of pride? Was it not a disposition contrary to confidence and humility? Was it not pride in disguise? Was it not a restless desire for a perfection far beyond my miserable powers? Was it not too presumptuous on my part?

AS for my severity towards others, I must acknowledge that its real roots are in my lack of charity. Into my dealings with others I have never brought any kindness, any tolerance, any respect for that inborn quality which is never to be stifled or repressed, but gently cultivated and developed. To conquer a soul I have always tried to take it by force and violate it, to coerce it with a high

hand, attacking it, reluctant and diffident, from the front; forgetting that the only way to win is by love, gentleness, and indulgence. I thought to make every man a theologian and a debater. To other people I depicted the Christian life as a heavy, bitter duty, which it is impossible to evade without incurring severe, eternal punishment from an inexorable and jealous God; I never stopped to think that the Lord in His adorable mind has planned the harmony of a human race made up of creatures all infinitely different as to character, aptitudes, nature and genius, and all in some way weak and needing assistance. I get here a confused glimpse of great truths. Oh, inscrutable Mind, who can discern even the smallest among the glorious harmonies of Thy majestic, eternal ideas? Here are some very simple and sublime words from the "Imitation":

IF all men were perfect, what would others leave for us to suffer, for the love of God?"

NOW, it is for this that God has so ordained that we should learn to bear one another's burdens; so that there be none without fault, none without his burden, none sufficient unto himself, none prudent enough by himself; but it needs be that we bear one another in turn, mutually comfort one another, help one another, instruct and correct one another. Now every man's degree of virtue is shown best when tribulations come, for occasions do not make a man frail but show what he is."

MY God, who has told me that faith alone justifies, and that nothing justifies except it? What but my pharisaical pride has instilled into me such a rigid, formal, intolerable concept? Why did not my heart warn me of the contrary? "Thou believest that there is one God; thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble." [1] So, then, because the Lord came on earth to bring His Word, shall

[1] Tu credis quoniam unus est Deus; bene facis; et daemones credunt et contremiscunt. (James ii, 19.)

His hand be shortened, so that He cannot save? "Behold the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it cannot save."[1]

[1] Ecce non est abbreviata manus Domini, ut salvare nequeat. (Isaiah lix, 1.)

XXVIII

He Begs for the Charity that Suffereth Long and is Kind

Monday, May 31st, 1915

FOR all these reasons and many others that I guess and vaguely discern, and in full and perfect trust in the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ, I pray Thee, most holy Virgin Mary, spotless and immaculate Mother of God made Man, and our most powerful advocate with Him, to intercede with Thy prayers to which nothing is denied, that He in His omnipotence may revive this fruitless, arid heart of mine, draw some good fruit out of its sterility, and life out of its death, may grant me, in a word, charity. It is written that three are the virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity: "which is the bond of perfection." That, as the

Vessel of Election admonishes, I may "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience, bearing and forgiving;"[1] that in all things I may leave judgment to the Lord, with a confidence that has neither harshness, nor impatience nor indocility; that my faith may not be a boast, but a burden and a responsibility; that it may not be a cause of bragging but of trepidation and fear.

FLOOD me with charity, O Lord, this is what I beg; this is the great good which I need and which is the breath of my soul. If I love Thee, I shall learn to love every one of Thy creatures, I shall love myself rightly and my neighbor as myself, I shall see in each one of my fellow men the immortal beauty of the soul that Thou gavest him, the eternal destiny Thou reservest for him, the love with which Thou surroundest him. Make me sensitive and responsive, make it easy for me to weep, to have compassion, sympathy, concern, and solicitude for all.

[1] Col. iii, 12, 13.

Make me to feel thoroughly my intimate and indissoluble ties with all mankind — with those present, with those who are gone, and with those who are to come, with the dead, with the living, and with those who are yet to be born — even at the cost of suffering the pains of them all, even at the cost of hearing in my heart the echo of all their tortures.

BUT, I see it, O Lord, I am begging of Thee a fate that is too high for me, I am asking for a divine destiny, the destiny that is Thine. What was Thy fearful agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, if not the very moment in which Thou for charity didst suffer all the evils of all men and for love didst take upon Thee all the sins of the world? I know that charity, even within the narrow limits of my poor little soul, means agony, pain, sacrifice, voluntary immolation, suffering; nevertheless I beg of Thee charity, give me charity, enrich my soul only with a quivering, bleeding, weeping charity. Do not make me hard, unfeeling and proud, even if this would bring me immunity

from every pain, and insure me a tranquil, placid, and undisturbed life. Lord God, I long to suffer, I am eager for suffering, I thirst for tears of sorrow.

I DESIRE suffering because I see that charity is suffering, and I want to weep over the ills of the world, I want to sweat blood, I want to feel pity for men and for myself. I am weary of being so selfishly locked up in myself; I want to expand, I want to love, I want to offer torrents of passionate tenderness. Here, Lord, take this heart of mine in Thy powerful hands and torture it, tear it, cover it with ulcers and sores, agonize it, if only thus Thou canst squeeze from it at least a drop of love. Send me all the pains of Job, provided Thou leavest me breath enough to say to Thee as he did: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

XXIX

He Sounds the Depths of his own Nothingness before God

Tuesday, June 1st, 1915

LORD, I take the opportunity of a propitious moment of sincere fervor to formulate here with a deep throb of ardent passion an act of complete and absolute humiliation, of solemn obedience and unconditional trust, before Thy majesty, O King, O Judge, O Lord, O Master, O Tyrant![1] Lord, I beseech Thee that this act may avail to make up for some past moments of ill humor, rebellion, and impatience, and to forestall some future moments of doubt or weakness or weariness. Here is the act of humiliation:

[1] [NOTE. The reader should remember that the word "tyrant" (Gr. Tyrannos) had not originally the hateful significance that it has now. It meant "absolute ruler." EDITOR.]

LORD, I acknowledge that I am nothing and that I owe Thee blind and submissive obedience, fully conscious and rational, precisely because of my nothingness and the absolute vanity of my power, my will, my intelligence, and my sentiments.

I CONFESS that I am a miserable, defenceless atom ruled by a fate that is beyond my power to modify in the slightest; I confess that I am in Thy hands, O Lord, and Thou canst do with me what Thou wilt — annihilate me, destroy me, condemn me, always with perfect justice, and I have no right either to rebel, which would be ridiculous to think of, or even to complain, which would be blasphemy and dreadful sacrilege. I confess, besides, that I am in the power of a large number of brute forces, which can crush me at any moment; that my life is imperceptible, fragile, precarious, lost in the universe, and that without Thy direct and perpetual succor it would ere this have been extinguished a thousand times. I confess that I am at the mercy

of the forces of nature, at the mercy of physical ailments, at the mercy of my passions, at the mercy of social currents and their potent suggestions, at the mercy of a thousand unspeakable and deadly errors, against which I have no possible defense, at the mercy of the smallest and most fortuitous accidents, against which I could oppose nothing, because humanly speaking I am utterly incapable of overcoming them, of guarding against them, of avoiding or even of foreseeing them. All my most vigilant, cautious, attentive prudence is as nothing. The bite of an animal may kill me, or the breathing in of a microscopic germ, a dizziness, a fall, a moment of inattention, an inanimate object, a puff of air, a drop of water, or a feather. If Thou dost not wish me to die, I can survive famines, plagues, disasters, cataclysms; I can stand scatheless in a fire, in an earthquake, in the thick of a fight on the battlefield, I can go through the most frightful dangers without turning a hair, I can seek them in vain and face them in vain, I cannot succeed in procuring my own death; but

if this be decreed above, neither armor, nor shelter, nor flight can avail. All my physical being is naught, I cannot do anything for it. I confess, O Lord, that I am nothing.

I CONFESS that I understand nothing. My intelligence may be the toy of everything. I am surrounded by inscrutable mysteries, and I am an inscrutable mystery to myself. Everything—matter and spirit, my senses and my reasoning power—may be a source of uncertainty and doubt for me. In everything I must trust to something or somebody, over whom I have no possibility of direct control. There is as much danger of error in over-confidence as in over-diffidence, or in the middle course. In reasoning, speaking, or reflecting I make use of concepts of which I do not understand either the nature, the entity, the value, or even their real objective existence, to say nothing of the fact that the very act of reflection is just as mysterious and incomprehensible to me. All is darkness and mystery. If Thou dost not enlighten me

with Thy grace, directly and in an entirely supernatural way, I am condemned never to look truth in the face, scarcely even to get a glimpse of its elusive phantom. I am a blind man groping in the dark, I cannot take a step without a guide and without help. I acknowledge and humbly confess, O Lord, that I know nothing and understand nothing.[1]

FINALLY I acknowledge and confess that I do not find in myself any clear standard or sure criterion to enable me to act, to choose, to decide, to know, to foresee. I do not know what I ought to shun. I do not know what is fitting for me, what is really useful or necessary to me. Nay, were I to listen to myself, and follow my impulses and instincts, not

[1] In the supernatural order it is quite true that none can take a step without the help of grace and the light of revelation. But it is a pious exaggeration to say of truths in the natural order that man with his reason alone cannot possibly know anything. For how could he make an act of divine faith if he did not first know how to use his human reason correctly? But it must be remembered that the author on page 158 writes that he first felt attracted to the Church by the "powerful, invincible rigor of its logic"; therefore by a perception that it satisfied the exigencies of his reason.

only should I not seek my salvation, but I should run direct to my certain and unfailing ruin. I cannot tell what is good and what is evil, what I ought to fear and what instead I ought to hope for my own good and the welfare of my fellow men. I have often seen unexpected good spring from what I believed was evil, and injury and misfortune from what seemed good and desirable. I have seen the most carefully laid plans, prepared with most subtle and diligent calculation, with everything foreseen that it was humanly possible to foresee, come to naught through some new and unforeseen circumstance. I have seen the most sudden and capricious fortunes fall to men who had done all in their power, with negligence and every sort of error, to avoid them. I know that all the vigilance of the just does not suffice to assure him his eternal destiny; I know that even the most impious and wicked man, fallen to the uttermost depths of the blackest and most hopeless ruin, may be overwhelmed with glory and grace at the last moment of his life. I am not certain about any-

thing, there is nothing that can make me calm and free me from worry either with regard to my lot in this life or to my destiny in the world to come. I cannot foresee the immediate, much less the remote consequences of anything; I cannot see the direct, far less the indirect. If Thou by Thy grace hadst not revealed to me an infallible standard of action, I could not know on what foundation to stand in performing even the most fleeting and negligible of my actions. But, on account of my shortcomings and imperfections, even Thy infallible standard avails me little, and even with Thy support I should always walk with difficulty and amid a thousand anxious doubts, if Thou didst not also sustain me with special graces at every step. Thy ruler is straight, but my hand trembles and I can never draw a line as I ought. I therefore humbly acknowledge and confess that I am nothing, that I know nothing, that I can do nothing.

Amid so much uncertainty, so much misery and impotence, the only refuge left me is to have recourse to Thee, to

believe in Thee, hope in Thee, trust in Thee, surrender myself blindly and absolutely into the arms of Thy omnipotence, Thy infallible prudence, Thy omniscience, Thy love. I have no alternative. This for me is the only possible course, the only reasonable one, the only one which is forced on me with invincible and insuperable power and evidence. Whom could I find, save Thee? If Thou hast made this life a labyrinth, wherein I go astray and lose my way more and more, where I do not find a living soul able to give me reasonable counsel, I must have recourse to Thee, because art not Thou the Daedalus? If Thou savest me not, who can save me? It is Thou Who hast made life and me in this manner, precisely so that I may not seek other help than Thee. Thus Thou dost me violence, Thou constrainest me to seek Thee, to entrust myself to Thee, but this violence that Thou usest with me is another proof — perhaps the best of all — of Thy ineffable tenderness and love for us.

XXX

The Glorious Prayer of the Christian Soldier Going forth to War

Wednesday, June 2nd, 1915

IF it please Thee, O Lord, I will go to war. I will enlist in an infantry regiment and go to fight, perhaps to die, for my beloved country in this final war of the Italian Risorgimento, undertaken by our King Victor Emmanuel III against the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to conquer the Italian territories that are still subject to alien rulers. O Lord, protect and bless the arms of my country, this most beautiful and blessed Italy, within whose borders it has been Thy will to place the seat of the Papacy, the visible center of Thy Church militant. O Lord, this war is just, necessary, and generous.

I FIRMLY believe that the victory of the Italian Army will be a great step towards the triumph of justice and the coming of Thy holy kingdom among men. I shall fight with pride and joy, without hatred, without malice. Should death come, I hope it will not surprise me and find me deprived of Thy grace, and that I may die peacefully, loving Thee and calling upon Thy name. May Mary pray for me in the hour of my death, as I have ardently besought her so many times, and mayst Thou grant me the grace to die with the name of Thy Holy Mother upon my lips.

GOD of Hosts, I beseech Thee, watch over the Italian Army and over the soul of every one of its brave little soldiers, so gay and quick and intelligent, so gentle, good, generous, resourceful, and frugal. Inspire its leaders, guide them to victory and grant that they may not abuse Thy favors by haughtiness and cruelty.

I PRAY also with all my heart for our enemies and brothers, whose dear and precious blood I shall perhaps have to shed. Take from their hearts every sentiment of hatred and rancor. Among them will be fighting many of Thy sons, who love Thee, who are good, intelligent, attached to their homes, their parents, wives, and little children! Grant, O Lord, that I may never forget this, so that I may never throw myself upon them in cruel, barbarous, savage fury.

ON the contrary, show me the way to exercise on the battlefield a little of the Christian virtue of pity, succor, and love toward my enemies no less than toward my friends. Grant that I may feel all the gratitude I owe to the Church for being so provident and thoughtful as to allow me to approach her sacraments even on the battlefield, so that I may ever be ready for Thy call.

I DARE not pray Thee to make me die in battle, O Lord, but I cannot help desir-

ing this great fortune, unless Thou hast willed to dispose of me in a different way and hast already decreed that my poor life should be spent otherwise. But if Thou seest that I am a useless and sleepy servant, if Thou seest that life has more difficult trials in store for me, then, O Lord, try me no longer, make me to die so — facing the enemy with our flag waving overhead.

TO die for one's country! What a splendid fate, my God! This sweet, dear country of mine, this glorious, sunny land, I have loved it with a passionate, jealous love, ever since childhood. Now I have learned to love it better, more deeply, more consciously since I love Thee, O Lord, and since I have learned that Thou hast given it to me to serve and to love and, if need be, to sacrifice myself for. Thou hast taught me not to fear death, Thou hast instilled love of country into me among my most natural and spontaneous sentiments, almost instinctively, like love for my relatives. To give my life for my country would be one of the

most desirable ways of spending it well. Therefore, if it be possible, O Lord, let me die on the battlefield. But if Thou dost not esteem me worthy of such joyous honor, indeed all too intoxicating and glorious, O Lord, may Thy will, not mine, be done.

WAR is a terrible scourge, a fearful chastisement that Thou inflictest on peoples. Although I know that it is often the bloody sign by which Thou recallest them to Thee when they stray away and become corrupt; although I understand that the evils of war, terrible though they be, are often amply compensated by the benefits they bring in their train; although I am persuaded that war is the great test of the endurance of races, the occasion of their internal concord, the inspirer of obedience, of discipline, of sacrifice, of self-abnegation, a purifying tempest that dissipates a thousand evil vapors, heals thousands of corruptions, cements the love of citizens, inspires a thousand forms of charity, yet I am not so inhuman or blood-thirsty as

to desire it or to wish that it be long and cruel. Therefore I believe it my principal duty as a good Christian to wish and pray that it may be brief and that peace may come soon, a long peace and a fruitful one, by which man will learn to love Thee more and more, our Divine Master and Saviour.

BUT I believe also that by going to war voluntarily I am doing my duty and obeying one of Thy holy precepts, Jesus Christ, blessed and true God. Thou hast told me to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; in life Thou wert the perfect model of a good citizen, amenable and respectful to the law and obedient to Thy lawful masters. Thou didst tenderly and ardently love Thy earthly fatherland, Thou Son of David, splendid flower of the purest blood of Israel. Thou didst make marvelous efforts to save and lead Thy own unappreciative and ungrateful people to glory and to melt its faction-rent and contrary heart. Thou didst weep over the evil and irremediable future of that Jerusalem that was

about to murder Thee. And finally, Thou wert silent before Herod, not merely because the tyrant was unworthy of an answer, but because Thou sawest in him the usurper of the rights of Thy race, with his illegitimate presence brutally desecrating the sacred and glorious memories of the palace of the Maccabees.

XXXI

He Meditates upon the Virtue of Tranquillity

Thursday, June 3rd, 1915

MY longing for action is so great, so great is my feverish craving for excitement, to such an extent have I too been conquered by the warlike ardor of the whole Italian people, that this morning after reading with a quiver of excitement the immortal words, so full of justice and of dignified, confident power, spoken in the Capitol by our Prime Minister, I thought of giving up the habit of this daily writing, as incompatible with the duties of the moment, out of place, a literary diversion, a contemplation that was, if not sterile, at least inopportune. But no; for all too soon, within a few days, I shall have to lay aside this habit, of which I am now so fond and which does me so much good,

when I shall be received into barrack-life; henceforth it will be impossible to resume it until my return from the war — if indeed it be decreed that I shall return. But so long as it is possible, I do not want to give it up; on the contrary, I want now more than ever to make it a good school of discipline and imperturbable peace for my spirit.

SINCE I began to love Thee, O Lord, I have begun to know, taste, and even to practice a virtue of a very ordinary and practical kind, formed from a combination of useful rules and beneficial precepts whereof the world has lost the real meaning — the virtue of tranquillity. I hope, with Thy divine help, and if I can overcome the evil inclinations of my nature and disposition, to succeed in making it a more constant habit. I want to learn to live without agitation and disturbance, without feverish anxiety, without impatience, without haste, without despondency. Once upon a time Socrates was able to spend the last hours of his life with perfect serenity, smiling, calmly and

patiently debating and amusing himself with the subtle objections of Simmia and Cebete, without the imminence of death disturbing his unchangeable character in the least. Affable and respectful towards the very judges who had sentenced him, he went so far as to infuse into the bystanders a little of the simple, sublime serenity of his own spirit; he took the cup of hemlock with unshaking hand and unflinching eye, and when death was already on him, rebuked with gentle fortitude his friends who could not withold their tears. If Socrates, aided only by the light of reason, high and magnanimous though it was, could do thus, what could not I accomplish with the direct assistance of revelation and divine grace, and helped by the supernatural power of the Sacraments?

OF course, I do not possess either the keen intellect of Socrates, or his spotless natural virtue, or the noble, valiant fortitude of his heart, but if he needed no less than all this to attain a result which even for him had something prodigious in it, I

must never forget, if I do not want to stain myself with the blackest of ingratitude, that the redemption of the world by our Saviour's sacrifice has made accessible to the most humble and modest creatures those virtues that formerly were the rarest privilege of the rarest elect souls, assisted by a genius equally elect. The word of Jesus has made the simple, little old Christian woman the superior of all the pagan sages. The most arduous of all virtues, that of voluntary and serene sacrifice, after Thy advent, O Jesus, became the easiest virtue of thousands of rude and ignorant martyrs. If, then, Thou wilt succor me, good God, my boasting will not seem excessive, if I aspire, notwithstanding my insignificance and incomparable inability, to outdo the example of Socrates. Everything is possible to Thee, O Lord, even to make something out of me, who am less than nothing.

XXXII

He Meditates on the Imperturbable Serenity of Almighty God

Friday, June 4th, 1915

TEACH me then, O Lord, some of the ways by which I must persuade myself to be always invariable, tranquil, imperturbable, serene, and placid. Show me how this virtue, which was very rare previous to Thy redemption, has now become for me an easy, simple duty, the practice of which ought to be exceedingly fruitful and agreeable, were I not so ignorant, stupid and full of weakness and misery.

FIRST of all, I ought always to be undisturbed and calm, because Thou art such, O Lord, and every least child of Thine ought always, within the limits of his powers, to try to resemble his perfect Father as nearly as possible. Tertullian

says: "He who once for all reserved eternal judgment until after the end of time is in no hurry to discriminate." [1] Marvelous majesty of Thy imperturbable calm, O Lord! Thou hast eternity before Thee, Thou hast omnipotence and omniscience within Thee, therefore Thou art never disturbed; Thou changest not, Thou art never in a hurry, Thou treatest all Thy children with an impartial mind, Thou leavest them free to themselves, permitting the good to tremble and allowing bold confidence to the wicked, but meanwhile Thou seest the end and Thou art preparing it with Thy hands without haste. "In the meantime He is impartial in indulgence and in severity to all the human race, and wills that good things to His enemies and ills to His own should be equally shared." [2] Thus Tertullian again, and here are the stupendous words with which the great Bossuet in his Sermon on Providence follows them:

[1] Qui enim semel eternum judicium destinavit post saeculi finem non praecipitat discretionem.

[2] Aequalis est interim super omne hominum genus; et indulgens et increpans, communia voluit esse et commoda profanis et incommoda suis.

YES, that thought was dictated to him by truth itself. For have you not observed those admirable words: 'God is in no hurry to discriminate'? Precipitating affairs is proper to weakness, which is constrained to hasten the execution of its plans, because it depends upon occasions, and these occasions are certain moments, the sudden flight of which necessarily causes haste on the part of those who are obliged to seize them. But God, Who is the arbiter of all times, Who from the center of His eternity develops all the order of the ages, Who knows His omnipotence and that nothing can escape His sovereign hands, ah, He does not hurry His counsels. He knows that wisdom does not consist in always doing things at once, but in doing them at the proper time. He allows fools and rash persons to censure His designs, but He does not deem it fitting to anticipate their execution because of the murmurs of men. It is enough for Him, O Christians, that His friends and His servants, with humility and fear, see from afar the coming of His

day; as for the others, He knows where He awaits them; and the day of their punishment is set; He is not moved by their reproaches, *quoniam prospicit quod veniet dies ejus*, for He sees that His day will come soon."

SO then, we too should be imperturbable; not because we are strong, but because by loving Him we participate in His strength and this makes us secure and invincible. Since He has deigned to call us to co-operate in His work, we must, before anything else, have confidence in Him and try to obey, not to understand. He directs the work and knows how it should be in the fullness of time. What matters it to us to understand His designs when we know that His purpose could not be finer? Let us obey Him without impatience, let us imitate Him in His calm. Let us not be in a hurry, let us not be so imprudent as to pretend to hasten the work by inordinate effort. Every feverish movement, instead of helping the work, hurts us. It is true that our moments are numbered, but also that our strength

is proportioned to our time. Let it suffice us to know that each one of us is coöperating here, in the narrow confines of the present, in the midst of perishing and fleeting things, in an eternal work which we shall eternally enjoy. The certainty of eternity is another reason that should make us calm. What is the use of worrying here? Why do we want to snatch the fruits before they are ripe? Why do we demand justice only when it suits us? What do we know? Why this impatience? Death will tell us all, and then we shall be fully satisfied. Let us learn to wait. Let us wait in adoration. Meanwhile, in the work that is assigned to us, let us imitate our Master's tranquil and imperturbable peace.

XXXIII

He Reflects on the Inconstancy of his Nature, and how he Finds a Remedy

Saturday, June 5th, 1915

IN the meantime, O Lord, these reflections should teach us as a simple duty to have tranquil peace and patience in the face of all the often unexpected, capricious and cruel vicissitudes of this futile, uncertain and fleeting life. Every truly Christian soul ought always to bear in mind that whatever happens to him is foreordained by Him Who knows everything and prearranges everything for the best. Let no man judge what he does not understand, but confine himself to whatever is his duty for the moment, and help on what he knows to be necessarily excellent above all. What a vast source of consolation there is in this one thought! But if I had this certainty well

fixed in my heart, as, however, I have it already secured in my mind,

"With such acuteness, that compared with it
All demonstration seems obtuse to me," [1]

what misfortune, what injustice, what persecution, what torture, what desolate, wicked, infamous lot could cast me down, disturb me or change my serenity? Even if I were to fall into the uttermost depths of unjust misfortune and undeserved abjection, and all the world were to rise up to bear witness against me, I should remember that up there in Heaven I have the only witness that is worth anything, the only one that does not betray, the Judge Who "sees in secret" and searches the heart and reins, Him in Whom we must place our boundless trust. Not to hope that some day He will render us justice is to mistrust His equity, and the most sacrilegious of blasphemies.

[1] Acutamente si che inverso d'ella
Ogni dimostrazion mi pare ottusa.
(Div. Com., Par., xxv, 95–96.)

FINALLY, an undeniable proof of our weakness — perhaps the most evident of all — is our inconstancy, the extreme facility with which we change with circumstances. We are cast down by a trifle, another trifle consoles us; to-day we are idle, to-morrow anxious; to-day we are discouraged, to-morrow bold and boastful; our feeblest and silliest opinions dominate us throughout life; the smallest and most negligible event, the word of a friend, some extraneous interest, is enough to upset the ideas that we regarded as unchangeable. Lord, how wilt Thou look upon us from above? With what sense of contempt and pity? Let us make a solemn resolution, let us solemnly swear: behold us, ready for everything, nothing can arrest or overthrow us, we lift up our heads, we clench our fists and shut our teeth; what a wonderful spectacle!

IN truth, firm resolution is the best sign of man's nobility. He is little, but what a big heart! Behold! he has faith that moves mountains. Alas, O Lord, our fine

resolution does not endure for a minute! A friend comes and invites me to go with him to the café, a newspaper falls into my hands, a lighted show-window attracts me on the sidewalk — forgotten all my firmness and fine resolutions, and there I am, distraught, idle, frivolous, laughing, chatting, loafing.

I TAKE up some work; this is a turn for the better; we are on the right road. Every morning I am up with the cock, and soon I am bending over my desk; in a few days the work is almost done. How easy it is! How joyful! How delightful are my busy days! How good the Lord is to me! Truly I was very silly to waste myself in bitter and discontented idleness! Now all my life is going to be just like this, busy, happy, fruitful. It would indeed be very weak and foolish not to continue. But alas, O Lord, there comes a morning when I have some other little thing to do. Patience; I lay the work aside for to-day; I will take it up again to-morrow. But on the morrow I begin a little later, I do not work so well,

I am more disinclined. Then the work seems unbearable; I try to conquer myself, then I beg for some excuse or other; it is all over, the spell is broken. Either the work will be given up forever, or I shall continue it with difficulty, bitterly, like a penance. And yet, when it is a question of my pleasure rather than of my duty, what prodigies of application, industry, and ingenuity! I am able to obtain it even under the most difficult and adverse circumstances. I always find time enough for that. And then? The pleasure I get does not satisfy me, I soon tire of it.

O HORRIBLE inconstancy of mine, sad witness of my weakness! I see well that the only remedy is to love God. Only leaning on His unchangeable strength can give me a little consistency. When one really loves God, religious duties are the only ones which one dares not neglect too much, for one has in mind that terrible, watchful eye ever fixed upon him. These duties become the discipline of our steadiness and constancy. Referring every-

thing to Him, thinking always of Him, seeing everything a reflex of His strength, of His wisdom, or of His goodness — which after all are but one — appealing only to His judgment and to His will, makes us share in a certain way in His ineffable and unchangeable unity and renders us less capricious and variable.

AND the practice of religious duties teaches us another thing, something which he who is not faithful to them cannot even suspect. Far from taking time and energy from work, they add to it, and make it fruitful and fertile. How this can be is not easy to understand, but few truths are so evident. He who does not practice his religious duties sees time fly with dizzy speed, he does everything with difficulty, and he is never in time; it seems that all opportunities slip away from him, and he is discouraged even before undertaking a work. Love of God infuses a peaceful tranquillity, a sense of safety, a confidence, an undefinable something, almost a contempt for life, and this makes men strong. Everything is done

without haste, and we feel that, provided we are willing, there is time for everything. We begin to work hopelessly, resigned from the beginning to the idea that we shall never complete it, and the work goes on of itself, spontaneously and without fatigue. In order not to neglect a religious duty, one willingly loses an opportunity that seems unique; and then the opportunity gently returns, more propitious even than in the first instance. When the day is overcrowded with work, the best way is not to plunge in impulsively and with annoyance and haste, but to collect one's self calmly, remain long in prayer, detach one's self in order tenderly to court the Lord's adorable smile, then begin easily, slowly, almost with indifference. In the end everything is done and well done, in order, without impatience, without weariness, and enough time still remains in which to thank the Lord with humble gratitude.

THERE was the secret of the miraculous life of those industrious and untiring saints who accomplished titanic tasks,

tasks so vast that the energy and genius of twenty men would have seemed too small for them. St. Paul, St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, St. Athanasius, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Dominic, St. Catherine, St. Theresa, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis de Sales, St. Joseph Calasantius, what an army of giants of the active life, what volcanic geniuses, what intrepid wills, what practical genius, what untiring and inexhaustible activity, often amid cruel opposition, with weak bodies, without help, in the span of a brief and troubled life! It was St. Francis de Sales who, after praising the devotion and activity of St. Louis, closed with these sublime words: "Therefore do boldly these exercises as I have directed you, and God will grant you enough leisure and strength for all your other affairs; yes, even if He have to stop the sun, as He did in the time of Joshua. We always do enough when God works with us."

ALL this has come into my mind to-day, yesterday and the day before

yesterday, and hence I conclude that I shall do well not to change my habits of meditation and prayer, no matter how much I may be distracted by my imminent departure for the war. Action is good, but it must not induce me to neglect the love of God. I shall await the moment without fretful impatience and with undisturbed tranquillity. This will be useful to me also when I shall be before the enemy at the front.

XXXIV

He Prays for the Blessing of God upon the Italian Arms

Sunday, June 6th, 1915

THANKS, O Lord, for Thy immense goodness, with which Thou hast anticipated my fervent desire to serve my country. This morning in the sweet, divine joy of feeling Thee wholly in me, while I was receiving the repast of Thy living Body, and earnestly beseeching Thee to give me that grace, Thy goodness had granted it already and the cheering message was about to arrive. Now — always provided it be in conformity with Thy will — complete the work O Lord; enable me to overcome easily the last difficulties, shorten the days I shall have to remain here, hasten the day when I shall be fighting on the battlefield. If then Thou shalt deem me worthy to end my sad trial and to die for my country,

that I may ascend to Thy divine glory, so be it, O Lord, so be it! But I dare not hope for so much. Such good fortune cannot be reserved for me, My Father. I know I am not worthy of it, I know that I must answer before Thy just anger, for too many faults and infamies, and that Thou dost not reserve Thy most glittering prizes for Thy most intractable, lazy, vain, and proud children. Thy will be done, always and ever. Blessed be Thou forever!

WHATEVER be the fate that awaits me, O Lord, I go forth to meet it exulting, for I feel in the depth of my heart that this war is just and holy, and that it is a beautiful and good thing to fight for this cause. I feel that this war will make us whole and make us great, will make us more worthy to love and serve and know and praise the Lord. He, in His boundless goodness, "made the nations of the earth in health,"[1] and this is the day in which our people find again their health. Yes, yes, O Lord, I feel, as the supreme singer

[1] Wisdom i, 14.

said of the supreme captain in his prayer for the prince setting out to war, that truly in the day of our exultation, "we will rejoice in Thy salvation." [1] O Lord, bless our arms, bless the holy war of Thy chosen people. It is fighting against nations who are mad and drunk for conquest, nations from which Thou hast taken the light of reason. They hope not in Thee, but in that power which Thou didst know how to shatter with the sword of Judas Maccabeus; but we, we hate no one, O Lord, and loving justice and liberty, we love Thee and Thy eternal glory. "Some trust in chariots and some in horses; but we will call upon the name of the Lord our God." [2]

[1] Ps. xix, 6.

[2] Hi in curribus et hi in equis; nos autem in nomine Domini Dei nostri invocabimus. (*Ibid.* 8.)

XXXV

He Reflects on the many Ways in which God is ever before the Man who Wants to Find Him

Monday, June 7th, 1915

IN the first place: from to-day on, O Lord, I am going to adopt a different style for these writings, or rather to abolish style altogether. I shall make only notes that I alone may understand; for I believe, rather I know, that through my foolish, incurable pride, my illusion of perfection, my hypocrisy towards myself, my presumption, vanity, calculation, and the beclouding of my vision as to the true condition of my soul, these papers may hide a terrible risk. Assist me, O Lord, for well Thou seest that I am convinced of my stupid, wretched state, and that I would be cured. I pray Thee to help me and I know Thou canst not refuse a relief so solemnly promised. (Matt. vii, 11.)

IN the second place: Here is a thought which flashed into my mind this morning and over which I have pondered a little: It is incredible how many are the ways in which Thou speakest directly to me and in which Thou art always before me as a friend, father, teacher, brother, protector, king, so that I can say that I have Thee before me in person, not metaphorically, but really, always:

1st — in direct inspirations;

2nd — in the person of my confessor, through whose mouth Thou dost judge, counsel, and forgive me;

3rd — in the Holy Scriptures, where I hear Thy voice in the person of the Father (Old Testament), in that of the Son (Gospels), and in that of the Holy Ghost (Acts, Epistles, Apocalypse);

4th — in the person of every Christian who speaks to me with affection, and in the writings of apologists, theologians, philosophers, etc., Thou always speakest directly;

5th — Thou speakest to me in the world, in the society of men, in the organization

of the Church militant, in nature and its laws; in everything I see Thy beauty reflected;

6th — in my mother there art Thou also, and I really listen to, venerate, obey, and adore Thee;

7th — in the government, the king, the ministers, my immediate superiors, the manager of my newspaper, its owner who pays me, Thou art in every one of them, each one of them represents Thee;

8th — in the Pope Thou art visible, the Bishop represents Thee as one of Thy apostles, Thou art in every priest;

9th — in the Mass I see Thee, the victim that is immolated and the sacrificing priest, it is Thou that art offered, Thy Blood is shed, Thou art consumed and mystically annihilated;

10th — Thy person, Blood and Body, is in the Eucharistic species.[1] I can see Thee, touch Thee, nourish myself on Thee;

11th — at the Benediction of the vesper service, it is Thou Who art lifted

[1] The expression is theologically erroneous, but it will easily be understood that it is an explicit profession of faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of the altar. — EDITOR.

over my bowed head, Who lookest down upon me, Who judgest me;

12th — whenever I wish, I can come to Thee before the altar and I find Thee there in the most Holy Sacrament, standing before me, reading my heart.

AND so on. Thus it is that Thou art truly before me, speaking to me, commanding me, regulating my whole life, so that were I always tractable, obedient, humble, and active, I could never err and I should already be happy and worthy of Thee here below. Instead, here is my shame: in spite of all, I never listen to Thee, I believe I possess Thee while I forget Thee, I believe I am obeying Thee even when I am rebelling against Thee. Only a day or two ago I was writing of myself that I am mean, unworthy, very far from being perfect; it was false humility, and I was writing it without real conviction, repeating something that I know very well to be true, because Thou hast said it, but without being at all inwardly convinced. I see it well now, it came to me to-day like a flash: I am

nothing but a proud hypocritical bigot, very far from doing my duty. In my laziness I do nothing but read — an excuse for sloth; I neglect all my duties through a false feeling of contempt and indifference for the world, which is really only an excuse for idleness. I do not answer letters, I am discourteous, I break my word, I do not keep appointments and promises, I put everything off, and I get my negligence forgiven with a few witty remarks. I do nothing by myself, I work at nothing. In this month I have done nothing but write these dangerous and pretentious records, but I have forgotten — dishonest that I am! — that I am paid to do my duty to the paper, and by not doing it, I am defrauding him who pays me. I have forgiven my enemies through a vague desire to humiliate them and to show myself generous before others. How full of faults I am! And I thought I had something to be pleased with! Miserable worm that I am!

LORD, O Lord, this is enough to discourage me. But no; courage! I will

not lose heart. Help me always, succor my blindness, for without Thee I can do nothing, and even with Thee I cannot do anything, with Thy thousand and one aids, ordinary and extraordinary, unless Thou addest as a mark of Thy abundant and unspeakable goodness the light of an altogether special grace. Up then, my soul, let us see if we cannot in some way do better!

XXXVI

He Bids Farewell to All he has Held Dear in Life

Tuesday, June 8th, 1915

LORD, Thou knowest, but I do not, if I shall be able to-morrow to continue my written meditations in this poor little diary. From to-morrow morning — if it please Thee — my new duties as a soldier in the service of my warring country will begin. I do not know what leisure I may have during the few days I shall remain in this city; then I shall depart for the battle front, relying only on Thy Providence and on Thy divine and no less unchangeable than holy Will. Therefore, not only do I not know if I shall be able at present to continue this wholesome habit, by which I was learning, little by little, to know myself better and to become as St. Augustine says, "emboldened by the fruits of

my labor,"[1] but perhaps it is already written up there in Thy heaven, O Lord, that I am never more to write about these things and that I must get used to the idea of leaving everything interrupted forever. So these words that I am writing now will have to be a sort of good-bye. For that matter, this, O Lord, is what our mortal life should be at every instant: a taking leave of some mortal thing, or rather of something already dead and gone. What do we know? We know only that every hour may be the last. When it strikes, we must be ready to give a serene farewell to all about us.

ON how many things have I set my heart, O Lord! Here in this desk how many familiar objects there are, upon which within a few days I shall cast a glance, that perhaps will be the last, things that for years I have considered my inseparable and indispensable companions! In these pigeon holes were accumulated papers which I had sworn a thousand times to keep forever (laugh at me, O

[1] Prole mea animosior.

Lord, for as Thou seest, I also join Thee sincerely, with a fine mingling of scorn, hilarity and contempt for myself), and yet a few days ago I destroyed them with my own hands; I saw them burn after I had torn them up without a glance of either regret, melancholy, or even of mere curiosity. Here are heaps of the letters of my friends of the world — praises, jests, requests, solicitations, blandishments, compliments. Here are my papers, in print and in manuscript, condemned works, interrupted works, badly finished works, works which only yesterday I felt sure I should complete, while to-day I do not even know if I shall ever be able to put my hands to them again. And among these there were some that I thought almost finished and already imagined sent to press, reviewed, praised, and so instinct with life as to survive me for years, even for centuries, why not? Instead, I leave everything as one who parts from a friend over whom hangs the threat of capital punishment. Only at this moment has this appeared clear and evident to me, but it is just as true always and

everywhere. To how many have I said good-bye — and they are dead! The last time I left Rome, could I have thought that perhaps I was looking for the last time at those streets, those squares, those buildings, that perhaps I was taking leave for the last time of those acquaintances with whom I was festively shaking hands? When my father caressed my head the last time, who could have told me that that caress was the last and that a few days later I should sobbingly kiss that hand, now cold and motionless forever?

So farewell to everything. Nothing restrains us. Everything passes away. Thou alone, O God our Father, livest unchanged and eternal, and in Thee alone can our love be placed with the certainty that we shall never lose it. In the meantime, by Thy grace, I feel that I regret nothing and that I am detached from everything, unless I am deluding myself too much. I come to Thee full of iniquity, certain of having shamefully squandered Thy treasures, soiled with every shame (O, I see well that I am not exaggerating

when I address myself so severely), but at least it seems to me that I do not deserve the reproach of being attached to what I leave behind. I am quite willing to let the dead bury the dead. The good I give up I shall find again in fuller measure in Thee; the evil from which I detach myself is a horrible slavery from which I free myself with real relief.

BUT no matter what is to be the lot Thou hast in store for me, O Lord, this period is closed. It is a day that passes, whether well or badly spent. It is meet therefore that I examine myself a little in order to be certain that, whatever may happen, I may hope something from tomorrow's dawn. Before I pray Thee for the future, I must judge and condemn my past. My sole hope is in the bitter grief of my repentance, and I know that only my bitter tears, united with Thy sacrifice on the cross and the ineffable effusion of Thy divine Blood, O Jesus, can cleanse and purify me, blotting out all traces of my infamous sins.

WHAT I was I dare not write in full. Lord, I was monstrous, blind, mad, and most foolish. Now, thanks to Thee, I am no longer so to such a horrible extent, but I see clearly that I am still an infinite distance from my goal. I have walked this year a little like a son of light, but, even without counting the days irretrievably lost, can I truly say I have made up for the time wasted? Ah no, of course not, O Lord, I have done only a very small part of my duty, and that little without foresight, without prudence, without intelligence. If I die in the war, what shall I leave behind? Nothing more than a pale, false, maimed remembrance; not a trace that is truly wholesome, beneficial, and lasting. I believe, I see, and know that I have lived almost in vain. As far as I am concerned, I have learned nothing but to die tolerably well, and I can say that this is a great deal, and that it might satisfy me; but what have I done for others? What have I taught, with what effort have I contributed in the least to the great and difficult task of

uplifting my brethren? I can just barely say that I have made up badly for all the evil done previously, contributing by example and flattery to the sad fate of many souls. Lord, I acknowledge entirely my wrong and my responsibility. Do not impute to others the fault which is mine. Give me the severest punishment. With all my heart, I invoke Thy blessing, O Father, on those I have led into sin.

BLESS also all those who have offended me. Do not impute to them this sin, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Thou knowest well how excusable they are, how hard and disagreeable has their life been, how they were born and have lived among an erring generation, too far from the light, with their ears stunned by false ideas, against which they could not defend themselves. But how dare I teach Thee to be merciful and clement, O great Father of us all? They are Thy children whom Thou lovest no less than me. So far as I am concerned, Thou knowest how much their injustice has availed me. If with Thy most holy assistance, I may

have a little strength to atone for their faults, behold, O Lord, I offer myself to Thee with all my heart. If any suffering will save them, give me first the strength I lack, then torture me, and save them. Thou seest, O Lord, the sincerity and the fervency of this offer of mine.

HELP my mother and my brother, then, all those who love me. Touch the heart of all my friends, enlighten them with Thy grace and make out of their beautiful souls and noble intellects so many instruments of Thy glory. If a sacrifice on my part be necessary for this, here I am, ready to do it.

I pray Thee for the dead and for the living, for the faithful and for infidels, unbelievers and heretics. I pray Thee for my king, for my country, for my brothers in arms, I pray Thee for all, for all including my miserable self who am of all the most unworthy, and at the same time the most needy.

AND finally, I pray for my sweetheart. Lord, I have never dared to speak to

Thee about her in these pages, but Thou knowest well that the thought of her has often come to my mind during these dialogues. In these last few days while praying to Thee and the Madonna my thought has dwelt upon her with more frequency, at greater length and with sweeter tenderness. O Lord, Thou hast blessed this love since the uncertain and troubled dawn of my new life, Thou hast ever made it the mysterious instrument of my salvation. Lord, protect my lady, in whose beauty I learned to love Thy affectionate, wise goodness. What will become of her? What will she think? How will she live? Grant that I may ever love her with a simple, pure love, with a resigned and devoted love. I do not ask more for her and for me. I only repeat, my God, that Thou art good, good, infinitely good.

O GLORIOUS Lord of every courtesy, O dear Father, may Thy kingdom come soon and Thy will be ever done. Father, O Father, love me so, I beseech Thee, as to make me worthy to shelter in my heart

a faithful and boundless, passionate and warm love for Thee, Light of my heart, my Salvation, my Joy, my supreme and one and only Good.

I COMMEND myself humbly to all Thy saints in Paradise, to all the dear souls in Purgatory, to all the angels, and above all, to that one who guards me, to whom I was intrusted by Thy divine compassion, and who at this moment is here beside me, bent over these pages smiling and reading my words. But above all, I commend myself to the most powerful intercession of the Virgin Mary, Queen of all Saints and Ark of the Covenant. I hope in her, to her I turn for succor and help; may she, the Seat of Wisdom, guide me into the arms of her divine Son, true Man and true God, consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. AMEN.

BOOK III

Salvos nos fac Domine Deus Noster; et congrega nos de nationibus: ut confiteamur nomini sancto tuo: et gloriemur in laude tua.

(Psalm, cv, 47)

Save us, O Lord, our God: and gather us from among the Nations: That we may give thanks to Thy holy name, and may glory in Thy praise.

XXXVII

He Discourses on the Righteousness of Killing in a Holy War

CRAORETTO, *September 29th*, 1915

O BLESSED GOD, too little loved by my culpable negligence, before everything else I earnestly beseech Thee to open my heart and infuse a little life into the poor words that I am about to say to Thee, then to accept the promise I make Thee to hide them jealously from every eye but Thine. If they are not good, it is well that they die unknown; if they are good, their goodness will be all in their secrecy. Their being hidden will be the reason of their fruitfulness. The germs of good which are destined to blossom in Thy heavenly kingdom cannot develop except in the depths

of the earth, for Thou art in the heavens and Thou art in the secret places, and I feel, I know, I have proved, that they are delicate and jealous germs. For Thee they are destined, to Thee alone I offer them.

THIS morning at five, not far from our camp at Dolegna, one of our soldiers, a cowardly, treacherous deserter who had stained his honor on the field of battle before the enemy, was shot. When I learned of it last night my first feeling was one of horror, pity, and repugnance. Yet justice must be done. Let us hope the soul of that wretch, piously assisted by one of Thy weeping priests, is now saved, received by Thy infinite mercy. Thou alone, the only just judge from Whom there is no appeal, canst know. But justice must be done. Thy mercy is never separated from Thy justice. Men must dare to be like Thee, as Thou Thyself hast commanded. Our mercy would be weakness and cowardice were it not united with justice. If I were to rebel against the idea that a

man can be punished justly by his own brethren, this alone would make me unworthy to wear the uniform of a soldier and bear the honorable weapons with which my country has intrusted me for her defense. These are the weapons of death, but a people at war must be either an assassin or an instrument of justice, culpable in the first case, holy in the second. May man judge, then? May man kill? Yes, if Thou dost will it. For it is Thou who created society, the family, and the country, and Thou canst summon us to defend them at all cost, against whomsoever may be the enemy. That soldier was an enemy of his country. In the name of his King he was shot. He set himself up against the law and the law has punished him.

OH! Lord, how guilty we are! How guilty a world must be in which this terrible law of death and blood must still prevail! Into what an abyss of abjection have we fallen! Save us, O Lord! Have pity on us and our misery!

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth also! This I desire, for this I hope. I want this to be in me and in all! I want all; I beg all from Thee, and I am sure I shall obtain all, if I have the faith that moves mountains. O Lord, make me to impress on my heart this certainty, that it is my fault if the whole world is lost, that I can, if I will, save the world and myself. No, I will no longer doubt.[1]

[1] These ardent words may seem inspired by exaltation or frenzy, but the reader must not forget that Borsi here and in several other places, speaks the language of mysticism. He knows by intimate faith, as well as by the authority of the Gospel, of the Apostles, and of the saints, that when a soul is wholly consecrated to Christ, it becomes as it were one and the same thing with Him, participates in His merits, thus co-operating in the salvation of the world, to such an extent as to be able to speak as Christ did. Did not Saint Paul write, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me," "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me"?

As to the other assertion: "It is my fault if the whole world is lost," likewise interpreted, means that he who has become a living member of Christ, a divine instrument for the salvation and the progress of the world, by betraying or neglecting his duty, is the cause of a delay, of a true deficiency in the fulfillment of the great work. But Borsi himself will give further on the exact interpretation of these and of other apparent excesses of word and of ideas.

XXXVIII

He Perceives how God Can Draw Blessings even from the Scourge of War

Thursday, September 30th, 1915

YES, O Lord, it is impossible to escape from this alternative: either the war which a people wages is an execrable crime or it is a sad necessity; either it is fought to perpetuate and increase injustice among men, or it is accepted as a holy struggle on behalf of Thy eternal goodness. From its very nature, war is always a sad scourge, even though its human consequences be to restore, to renew, to purify, to regenerate. If it is not the height of irreparable evils, it is because Thou, in Thy inexhaustible goodness, hast given laws of love, of goodness, and of mercy to the world and to mankind, in spite of appearances

to the contrary. No doubt this would be a terrible sign of ingratitude and misunderstanding — but what am I saying? It would be to doubt Thee and Thy providence, it would be to consider Thee powerless and weak, it would be to doubt Thy very existence. Even from a war which men have brought about unjustly and fate has made victorious, Thou in Thy patience that never tires in face of our miserable perversity knowest how to draw innumerable blessings both for the conquered and the conquerors, moral benefits which are the only solid and imperishable good.

BUT how can men and nations dare to make themselves judges of their own case? Is not their judgment infirm for this very reason? Ah! Lord, all this is very terrible, and I cannot understand why all men now living in this bloody world are not stricken with terror, do not pour ashes upon their heads and burst out in lamentation and groans and do penance to move Thee

to mercy and pardon. If men pass judgment on their fellow men, if they dare to take on themselves this terrible responsibility as a sacred duty, the reason for this necessity lies in the evil that still prevails in the world, for the roots of greed, pride, envy, and baseness grow ever stronger. Who but Thou can save men from error? Is it not Thou Who permittest each one of us to be at peace with his own conscience in the midst of this tempestuous whirlwind that sweeps us all away? Is it not Thou Who hast taught us obedience and discipline? No matter what happens, every man may be absolutely certain that he will not err, for even he who commands should not obey his own opinion, but should have the strength to obey the law which is imposed upon him by an authority higher than his own. And if he make a mistake through an involuntary error of judgment, it is enough that he has had at heart the good of all, that he has done his duty, and he may put his trust in Thy final justice, which will irrevocably settle all things,

amid the jubilee of the universe and to the confusion of the wicked.

AS for me, O Lord, help me to do my whole duty, whatever the cost. I beg and beseech this of Thee with the certainty that Thou wilt grant it to my unshakable faith. Let me not be a man of little faith. I feel that all depends on this.

XXXIX

He Discovers that Victory Must be in Himself

Friday, October 1st, 1915

WHAT a mistake I am making, O Lord! To what purpose do I mourn over the misery of the world and the crimes of men? I am only a coward and my mourning is of despair and discouragement, not of hope or fortitude. What a terrible waste of time it would be to confine myself to groaning with my head in my hands and not set to work at once with the absolute and unconquerable certainty and the clear, simple, evident sureness that I alone am sufficient for all and that victory will unfailingly smile upon me! To work then, and at once! And first of all a fruitful prayer.

MY adored Lord, I trust in Thee alone. Thou art the origin of my life

and the inexhaustible fountain of all my strength. Provide for me still, for I hope in Thee. Hearken unto the intercession with which I implore Mary powerfully to render efficacious my unworthy petitions. And Thou hast done it already, O Lord! Always, O Lord most faithful, whenever I have asked a favor of Thee, I have seen Thee forestall me and grant the favor before I asked it; without knowing it the treasure was already mine, having reached me through unsuspected channels, by some pleasant trick of Thy providence. Even now as I write, is it not true, O Lord, that I am obtaining a little grace which I had scarcely dared to think of, and in the meantime I am purging myself of a little vanity? O blessed God, I thank Thee! How I adore Thee! I would die for Thee, so much do I love Thee!

THE splendid voice of a saint who shines like a sun in Thy glory and who protects and aids me from up there, a voice that Thou through the medium

of a loving soul makest to reach me down here, proves to me that the work must begin with myself. I am a fool if I believe I can move a grain of dust in the world without first changing myself. The secret of victory lies in beginning with one's self. I have tried it, and I know, so what need have I, blind, weak, foolish soul, to repeat it to myself? While I talked no one ever listened to me. But as soon as I acted I became persuasive, and I no longer find any one incredulous. The very little vague and imperfect good — Lord, how imperfect! — that I have done in myself has immediately multiplied a hundredfold, shining all about me, and at once become strangely fruitful. And does not all this encourage me to do more? If I, by doing almost nothing, have obtained so much, what could I not do had I the courage and the strength to work out some real reformation in myself! Again, I repeat, the secret of victory is within myself; the principle of my own and of the world's salvation is in me; it is I who must begin; I have

within me all the wealth of omnipotent weapons for the combat; I believe it, O Lord, I am sure of it, I can never be too sure of it.

AND yet my little victories might have been the cause of my undoing, for I was satisfied and content with them, and was about to stop, all puffed up with vanity. Poor friends of mine, who tell me they envy me because they see I have found stability, certainty, and serenity, and know not what Thou seest, O Lord, that at every step the labor increases, the duty becomes heavier, the responsibility greater! Yet I was about to stop and lose all, for he who halts begins to fall back, at first insensibly, then rapidly, then at a dizzy pace, and he knows not if the next moment he will be able to recover himself. The life of the saints is a constant rowing against the current; if they rest on their oars the current at once sweeps them down the stream. Therefore, on, on! Courage and go forward! Just as I say to my soldiers when they begin to falter on

the march, to break ranks and let themselves sink exhausted at the side of the muddy road.

HERE is the proof: being at war made me happy, like a long-desired good that is reached at last. I seemed to be engaged at last in the midst of a beautiful, noble, chivalrous, romantic adventure. Everything favored me, my conduct admired, messages of love from the world; as soon as I arrived before the enemy, two or three opportunities of proving my *sang froid*, the battalion animated by my mere presence. I was astonished at the calmness with which I bore privations and dangers; I had all the fictitious, fatal intoxication of those who have received their reward. I said to myself: I am on the road to victory and there is nothing more to be done. And instead! I shiver still when I think of the danger I was running into through this false and pernicious certainty.

SCARCELY had I begun to feel satisfied — when I was already almost

invoking a beautiful death on the battlefield to crown and render my work more fruitful — like a novelist who writes his epilogue and aspires to set down the word "finis" in his own style, according to his own way of thinking, and with a grand flourish — that very moment my fall began. There was I, become intemperate and gross at table, quite happy at astounding comrades and superior officers by my elegance and outward polish, forcing my gaiety, boisterous, talkative, filling myself like a keg, drinking, smoking, acquiring all the loose habits of the barracks, becoming slanderous and malicious.

I BEGAN to see at close range the inevitable human defects of this warlike undertaking, and there I was, ready to indulge in useless, fruitless, verbose, and bitter criticism, among ourselves, on the one hand, and lying, childish glorification of the world, on the other. What days and hours of bitterness and anguish, of real, profound inward humiliation! Twice I even caught myself in an out-

burst of fury. I was also obliged to neglect my religious duties a little, and I lost their assistance. Now I understand how easy my life as a civilian was, how easy and pleasant the performance of my duties, how harmonious and well ordered the sequel of my prayers and the frequentation of the Sacraments in peace. But here one must do as best he can. Physically, I have grown strong and vigorous, by leading a rugged, animal life; morally and spiritually, I feel starved and empty.

THROUGH my good fortune and by Thy grace, O Lord, and through no merits of my own, Thou dost help me lovingly and watchest over me, since Thou didst inspire me to write that farewell letter,[1] to which I owe the precious aid I have received from that dear, good creature. Now my eyes are opened and I see the dangers I have run. The only remedy is to rise still higher. Forward, ever forward, with Thine aid, O beloved Lord! May I find the way to improve myself, and a big step for-

[1] To his mother.

ward will have been taken. I shall win, I am sure of that. I want to fit myself to be used by Thee as Thou wilt, O Lord, as Thou hast decreed and determined in Thine eternal council. I place my whole self in Thy hands, and I ask Thee the life that Thou hast promised, my sweet love, my sweet love, Jesus!

XL

He Makes up his Mind that Others May be Saved by Him

Saturday, October 2d, 1915

THEREFORE, O Lord, I must needs be more temperate, sincere, simple, active, diligent, and pious. Temperance will be a purification, a release from the encumbrance of the flesh, which I always drag with me like a weight. Then my mind will be free from mists and torpor, I shall not be tired and languid, I shall not have that physical depression against which every good impulse fights in vain. I shall have a clearer and brighter mind, an imperturbable and alert coolness, a nimbler and livelier alacrity; I shall be, as it were, reanimated and unburdened, I shall be more master of my members, of this body that Thou hast given me as an admirable instrument of victory.

I can do it, I know; I can easily attain this first essential and fundamental result. I have already tried out my body and found it agile, resistant, young and healthy, in spite of the soft sedentary ways to which I was accustomed in civilian life.

SINCERITY is no less necessary to me than temperance. If I be candid and loyal with myself and others, I shall avoid asking from my comrades in arms an esteem that is not my due. With simplicity and modesty, instead of vain and boastful ostentation, I will set before me as my goal the tranquil fulfillment of my duty in all its humblest and minutest details, without bragging and without seeking or expecting even an occasion to shine. I shall have to impose on myself a spontaneous and sincere respect for my superiors, a real and trusting esteem that is not affected, presumptuous, malicious contempt, masquerading in the guise of external, formal deference. Nothing is easier than criticism, nothing more pernicious and destructive.

I WILL obey with conviction, for the pleasure of obeying punctually and well, with the certainty of thus coöperating in the best way to the success of the whole undertaking. Therefore I shall have to be active and diligent, working without reluctance and with precision, doing all I can by myself, exacting with resolute firmness the same obedience from my inferiors that I owe to my commanders. I will not be satisfied with precise obedience, but will do something more; I will watch, have some initiative of my own, and seek perfection. Even calling attention to things may be a nuisance, but I will overcome that sense of negligence and laziness which tempts me to let things go in order to be free from some annoying duty. Finally, beyond all this and to crown all, to make every one of these little efforts bear fruit, I will be pious, I will pray with more fervor and perseverance. I will approach the Sacraments of the Church, the food of my soul, with more timid and ardent faith.

ALL this is little; it is an easy, simple effort, very modest but infinitely sweet and consoling to me, therefore desirable in all, and light and sweet like the yoke Jesus has offered me. It is little, but I must needs convince myself that this little endeavor in myself is enough to make Thy kingdom come on earth, O Lord, quickly, resplendent, complete, like a flash, an unexpected revelation, the salvation of all peoples and of the Church. I shall be a convincing example; I shall revive downcast hearts; all around me will wonder and ask themselves what may be the secret of my serene, placid, humble, fruitful activity, that has not a moment of ill humor or discouragement, what the secrets of my discreet and imperturbable gayety; all will ask from what fount I have drawn such strength, which they will easily contrast with their own discouragement, ill humor, and weakness And they will understand that I draw this force from faith, that Thou art the giver of it, and they will know from my mouth that all

can have as much and more if they will, provided they ask it of Thee with faith. I will tell my secret to all, and I will give to all the taste for and the desire to obtain what I have already obtained. In this manner the force for good will radiate blessings and multiply; and in the meantime I will ask Thee ardently every day to bless the power of good in its battle against evil. He who asks of Thee shall obtain, provided he is sure of it first; he who seeks will find, provided he has determination and sure hope of finding. Then this warlike undertaking will be victorious, for all will do their duty. In fact it would be enough to make victory certain if all were to do barely the tenth part of their duty, while on the contrary victory is still uncertain, because the whole mass is still somewhat brutal and inert, somewhat discontented and distrustful.

FROM me, then, the healing of the sick, convulsed world may begin; I can be the first cell repaired in the decayed tissue. I can be the first, and the force

that will emanate from me will find, instead of obstacles, a travail of undreamed renewal, making it easy, with latent fecundity and desires for good. The whole world anxiously awaits me and is prepared to receive me. I already know, for I have seen. It is not a supposition, but a certainty derived from experience. Perhaps, if I let this moment pass, all will be lost forever, and I shall be the only one to blame for this immense catastrophe, just as a sentinel who falls asleep may be the cause of an irreparable defeat and the annihilation of an entire army. Let me become accustomed to this thought, O Lord, a thought that gives me pain and takes away my breath. Yes, it is so. All the collective movements of mankind are determined by the will of each. In the day of victory every individual shall have the entire credit, and in the day of defeat will feel the awful, terrifying weight of all the blame. It is as simple and exact as a mathematical axiom. It is not my pride. O Lord, help me to understand this certainty which now

and then flashes indistinct and confused across my mind. Bless my efforts if Thou seest a good will in me, punish me with Thy lightning-like, inexorable, eternal chastisement if Thou seest in me the smallest act of weakness and cowardice. I know what I am asking. I am ready for any sacrifice. I hope and trust in Thee alone, O Lord.

AMEN.

XLI

He Perceives the Wondrous Assistance he is to Have in the Work of Regeneration

Sunday, October 3d, 1915

TO-DAY, O Lord, I united myself with Thee, to find the strength necessary to confirm my good resolutions, and throughout the day I have done nothing but receive proof after proof that I had already obtained what I asked even before I asked it, such a divinely generous and magnificent giver art Thou. I have not yet done anything, but far and near I have already found an unlooked-for multitude of waiting and longing souls. I say "far and near," but that is incorrect, for time and space count as naught in the realm of Thy charity, which is eternal and infinite. I feel, because so it seems to me, that this

work will endure only through time; but how do I know, what do I understand, I, a poor blind mortal to whom Thou alone, O Lord, out of pity for me hast been an eye? Yet thus it must be, for what is space? I feel vaguely but with no certainty that in this work of restoration thousands of unsuspected souls are coöperating with help that I know not of. Blessed be they all for their charity! How many living and how many dead!

IS it possible to imagine an easier and sweeter effort than the one which I am undertaking, with so much assistance and made easy by the work of centuries that have preceded me, the results of which I find ready to hand like the ripening fruit of mistakes, attempts, trials, and vain efforts? Yes, yes, O Lord, thanks to Thee, let us press forward, let us all go on towards Thy kingdom with ever increasing speed. How unpardonable I should be if I were not to profit by this! Now I must be patient, cautious, and prudent, in order

not to spoil everything. Shall I see the results here, now, in time? What does it matter? Perhaps, nay certainly, I still have a too frivolous and worldly idea of what victory is. It comes when least expected, silently, stealthily, like a secret lover during sleep. Perhaps it is just behind us, smiling calmly, at the very moment of our most frenzied anxiety. But, O Lord, let me not dwell upon this thought, lest I fall into idleness and sloth. Make me, above all, to thank Thee and adore Thee always, however Thou mayst wish to make sport of the errors of my mind.

THIS is the day when even the mud has seemed beautiful, in which I have loved tenderly and with childlike gayety whatever provokes the blasphemy and curses of others. To-day I have seen that when love is in the eyes all the world seems beautiful, nay at every step new and unsuspected beauties are disclosed, whereas when the eyes are loveless even that which is universally conceded to be beautiful seems hideous.

Finally, I have noticed that habituating one's self to ordinary beauty ends by blinding the eyes to the rarest and most exotic loveliness and diminishing the possibility of joy. It is not so with children, whose angels always behold the face of the Father. To love Thee is everything, O Lord, and I love Thee and will love Thee ever more, my life!

XLII

He Reflects on the Triune Truth which is the Secret of Salvation

Monday, October 4th, 1915

"THE Son can do nothing of himself, save that which He seeth the Father do." The Son can do nothing of Himself, but He does all and can do all in the strength of the Father. A king is not strong except by power of law, and he will not be strong unless he be the first servant of the law. A man can do nothing unless he love God, and only by virtue of this love. Here are three truths that are one single truth, and contain in themselves the secret of the salvation of every soul, the secret of the salvation of the world, the essential bases of social life, the key to the history of the human race and of its hopes, the fortunes of the Church, the power of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

XLIII

He Applies the Truth to himself and is Ready for any Sacrifice

Tuesday, October 5th, 1915

AND here, O Lord, is how I can apply to myself the truth I jotted down last night without understanding it, when I was so sleepy and tired. This effort that I should like to make, and that I beseech Thee to make me accomplish at any cost, even of my life (which would not be much), at the cost of every sort of anguish, suffering the affliction, the faintness, the solitude, the disillusion, the sterility, struggling against the indifference, the hatred, the scorn, the distrust, and the contempt of all, this effort will not bear fruit unless done in Thy name, for the love of Thee, for Thee alone, without hope for myself. What the Son accomplished here below, namely my

salvation and that of mankind, was nothing but the affirmation of the Father's will. The law of the Father, was accomplished and is being accomplished still in the Son and in Him alone, for if He had denied the law of the Father, He would have denied Himself, because only the Son knows the Father and they to whom He has revealed Him. So a king will not be king unless he be the first to obey the law to which he owes his kingship, for in the act of denial he denies himself and his reason for being. The king is the first of servants, the servant of servants, if he wishes to be king. If he believes that royalty consists in caprice, in being able to do what he pleases, he is no longer a king but a tyrant; he is no longer the honored servant of justice, but an impotent and abject slave of injustice.

IF all kings and ministers thought thus, the world would already be saved and human society would be happy. Thus, in fine, every man must obey God and Christ, which is the same, for

he who loves God finds Christ. With divine justice Jesus accused the Pharisees of not believing the law of Moses (which, however, was just, not because it was his but because it was that of their ancestors, of their fathers and grandfathers, and might be called everlasting), by asserting that this incredulity will be their accusation, for if they had believed in Moses they would also have believed in Jesus, "for he wrote of Me." So the Father does not judge any one, but hath left all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father; he who honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father Who hath sent Him. So also, in human justice, where it is not the King nor the law that binds and looses, condemns and acquits, but rather the judges, representatives of the King and the law, working incarnations, as it were, of an absolute and superior principle, who condemn and absolve in the King's name and according to the law. When the judge is unjust he is no longer a judge but a transgressor.

HERE then are two identical truths; no one knows the Father except through the Son, since the Son does nothing of Himself, but does all in the name of His Father and came in the name of His Father. Therefore no one can receive the Son unless he have in himself the love of God.

YES, my divine beloved Master, my delight, my joy, my life, I may be able to accomplish something if I learn to imitate Thee. I must not accept glory from men, I must not receive those who speak in their own name, nor must I be of those who glorify each other without seeking the glory that proceedeth from God alone. ("How can you believe, who receive glory one from another: and do not seek the glory which is from God alone?")[1] I must learn not to do anything of myself, but to judge according to what I hear, namely, according to Thy adorable voice, resounding in my heart, so that my judgment may be just, for I do not seek

[1] St. John, v, 40.

my own will but the will of Him that sends me ("and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him that sent me").[1]

HERE, then, is my prayer: O Lord, give me the strength and the forbearance that I lack; inspire me with resignation and a spirit of sacrifice which I, weak, cowardly, inconstant, foolish, vain, and sterile, would be utterly incapable of finding in myself, and then heap upon me the sum total of all misfortunes and pains; offer me the saddest of all fates and grant that out of all this may spring forth a little good for a world in anguish. Forgive those who know not what they do, and give me the joy of winning that reward which I know so well and which, therefore, I should be a fool not to wish to win at any cost.

TRUCE and mercy for us all, my God. I trust in Thee. I do not ask that my name be blessed. It is easy for Thee to make my sacrifice unknown,

[1] St. John, v, 30.

my name accursed and execrated, and to let me know all this before it come to pass. Thou canst do all. Perhaps some day in this diary, born in the midst of war, I shall speak of the stimulus of glory, as I have already talked of it to my soldiers, as a providential stimulus which Thou hast placed in the heart of men that Thou mayest have another means of drawing them to Thee, and to give them an instrument of good. But I know that it is abused, as are all Thy gifts; and who has abused it more than I, the vain and fatuous, who have so shamefully abused the best of Thy graces? Punish me, therefore, where I have sinned. Grant that no one may ever say to me the words of the day of liberation: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," and yet that I may be worthy to come in Thy name.

"But this dependeth on thee, my son."

"I know it, Lord, and Thou seest how I trembled as I wrote, daring to

write this truth that I know. But help me, O Lord, because I cannot."

"Why art thou fearful, O thou of little faith?"

"Well, Lord, I promise Thee I will not have little faith."

XLIV

He Reflects on the Horrors of War and the Consolation of Knowing God

Wednesday, October 6th, 1915

TWO cases of cholera in camp to-day and our company is quarantined. After a few hours, the camp having been removed to another place, picturesque animation arose among the soldiers, singing and laughing in the sun as they pitched their tents in a meadow surrounded by greenery. Entered the mess, greeted by officers who squirted lemon juice over my head and hands. Returned to the mud of the old camp to get my clothes and mattress; met a stretcher bearing a man, stricken with cholera and perhaps dying, who this very morning was in perfect health and inspecting the reserve rations of the first platoon.

LAST night a gathering of soldiers in the mud around the wine barrels. To-morrow the blessing of the flag and its presentation to the regiment. Thus in the course of a few hours a debauch and a sacred ceremony, misfortune and laughter.

AND I think of all Europe plunged in blood, horrors, weeping, butchery, feats of bravery, and deeds of dastardy, lamentations and singing, and I ask why all this? My mind stops confused and terror-stricken before this mystery of life and death, of extermination and renovation, in which men seem to be whirling in some brutal insensate sabbat-dance. Yet to-day I was able to follow a silent pathway in peace, as if I had been far away from this tragedy in which I am living, and then I was able to take from my baggage in the grass, while my tent was being prepared, a bold commentary on Thy words of promise and menace, O Almighty Master of our destinies.

TO-MORROW morning Thou shalt be with me in all Thy divinity and in all Thy humanity, body and soul, and I will beseech Thee, O beloved Lord, to be merciful to one I did not know, but who lives only in the faithful memory of mutual friends. And here I am, gathering up the external features of all these things like an unconscious spectator, without succeeding in grasping their meaning even vaguely, and I feel, as it were, a weariness and a torpor not without sweetness in telling Thee I know nothing, and do not want to lose myself, in words, for I am satisfied to love Thee tenderly, to trust in Thee, and submit myself to Thee like a little child. Are not all these presumptuous mental efforts of a little hypocritical scribbler dangerous and vain? Ah, the sweetness of thinking no more, of loving Thee ingenuously, of enduring with almost unconscious resignation, of smiling spontaneously, of clasping Thee to myself like an intimate treasure, Jesus, who livest and workest in me without my knowing how. But

when will Thy peace come? Will it come to me? Shall I ever know how to be patient and trusting, shall I be among those blessed ones who persevere even unto the end? I must always remember well this day.

XLV

He Meditates upon the Triumph of God in the Ruin of Worlds

Thursday, October 7th, 1915

AFTER this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands:

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures; and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God,

"Saying, Amen. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving,

honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.

"And one of the ancients answered, and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence come they?

"And I said to him: My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell over them.

"They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat.

"For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." (Apoc. vii, 9–14.)

O, in the midst of the unloosed hatreds of nations, Lord, while the flames of

destruction seem bent on spreading wider yet and the whirlpool of extermination sucks down other peoples, other tribes and other nations into its depths, I, a poor soldier of Thy errant people, the least soldier of Thy earthly militia, consecrated to the pains and to the task of a double warfare, inefficient but full of good will, expending my words for the ranks and files of men who are my flock as I should like to spend them for all the multitudes that are lost in evil ways, in sin first and then in the misfortunes that are its direct and inevitable consequences, so, my beloved Lord and Master, confiding in Thee I opened Thy book and through Thy will found the words by which Thou answerest and encouragest me.

ETERNAL words, wellsprings of truth that is perpetual, infinite, mysterious, profound, inexhaustible, and ever new, the arcana of whose meanings it would be impossible for me more than to touch upon here. Nevertheless I will try. Help me, come to my assistance.

FEAR not, my son, if thou hopest in Me, in My coming and in My justice. To take thy gaze from the wreck of peoples who hate and slay each other, where sin still has its sway and exterior darkness still prevails, gaze upon My triumph in the midst of all peoples united in My glory, in the heavens where sin was conquered and shines the interior light, in the recesses of thy conscience, in the secret places of that immortal soul which lives in thee as one of My eternal ideas, and beyond the whole material universe.

THE evangelist who was able to enumerate the tribes of Israel one by one, the very evangelist with the eagle vision, says no one will ever be able to number the vast multitude redeemed by My sacrifice, to be brought back to the glory of the Father: 'A great multitude standing before the throne and in sight of the Lamb.' They shall be before the glory of the living God in the sight of the divine host, namely of the only

innocent one sacrificed for justice and for mercy.

"Son, is not this victory, which shall be thine also when thou wilt, sufficient for thee?

"Son, wilt thou refuse to cry out with a loud voice, Salvation and glory to our triumphant God and to the Innocent Saviour, who will triumph with Him, in Him, and consubstantial with Him?"

NO, Father," I answer, "I will never refuse. Be Thou ever blessed, nay ever more blessed, if Thou makest me to behold the splendor of so much happiness in order to render less unbearable the tremendous tribulation by which Thou hast decreed that I should gain it; if Thou hast done it to reveal to me the reward that will follow before I gird myself for the severe tests that I — perhaps too blind in my faculties and ignorant in my wretched weakness — have for so long been asking of Thee."

XLVI

He Continues his Meditation on the Truimph of God

Friday, October 8th, 1915

THEREFORE, O Lord, I will not fear the great tribulation, for therein I can wash my robe and make it white, for in it I shall be redeemed and purified, I shall become a participant in the divine nature. Not by any merit of my own, O Lord, but by Thy bloody redemption, my Saviour who hast died for me, that Thy blood may wash me and make spotless my guilty conscience and my soul that is full of ingratitude and baseness. I know and recognize that I have been saved through Thy sacrifice, "in the blood of the Lamb," and I would that this timorous gratitude of my heart prostrated at Thy feet were still more ardent. My salvation would suffice to

repay superabundantly for any most atrocious suffering, but Thou art so infinitely good that Thou art not content to give me that merely, but hast in store for me an even greater bliss, infinite, most sweet and blessed, the spectacle of Thy triumph, when all the spirits, in the midst of human wisdom and the evangelic revelation — "in the midst of the elders and the four animals" — in the light of our knowledge and of that a thousandfold more brilliant and redeeming of Thy revelation, shall exalt and adore Thee according to righteousness, attributing to Thee, for ever and ever — in the peace and life they have won forever -- benediction, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power and might. Amen. So be it. So shall it be. So is it.

BY the infinite merits of Thy blood Thou hast brought the warriors to the supreme victory, "therefore they are before the throne of God," that they may serve Him always in the sanctuary of His will, "in his temple." Then shall Thy will be done, as we have ever prayed, as Thou Thyself hast taught us to pray, *fiat vo-*

luntas tua. Behold how we shall serve Thee uninterruptedly — "day and night," as now indeed we serve Thee only rarely and badly. Behold how He Who sits upon the throne shall dwell among us, shall be our strong victorious king — "He Who sitteth on the throne shall dwell amongst them."

HOW much, O Lord, how much have I hungered and thirsted after justice, how have I invoked it in the aridity of the heat, in the desert of this earth! How I have called upon Thee, with what despairing cries, with what humble insistence, with what trembling anxiety, while the sun, regulator of earthly seasons, circled over my head as he marked the course of the days and of time, which has numbered all the ages destined to die with me! But now, O Lord, I shall be among those who are filled, who neither hunger nor thirst: "They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat." Thou, O Divine Victim, shalt be placed at last in the center of the triumph, Thou shalt be our ruler, Thou

Who hast opened the inexhaustible well-springs of grace, the fountains of living waters. Thou Who shalt wipe all tears from our eyes, the tears that were shed in the days of our bondage.

THANKS be to Thee for Thy promises. Then I shall seem not to have wept enough, for I shall perceive that blessedness will be in proportion to the tears shed here below. Then I shall be up there in heaven where Thy will is already done. There Thou rulest and governest the blessed. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

XLVII

He Prays Fervently for Italy and for her Victory

Saturday, October 9th, 1915

YESTERDAY, O Lord, thou didst deign to bless the flags that had been presented to the regiments of our brigade, to the two fighting regiments of the mobile army, which covered themselves with fresh glory in the trying and bloody days of Plava. Through the lips of Thy priests Thou didst bless these flags of ours and we all swore ever to defend them at the cost of our lives. We raised to heaven our right hands, the hands that grasped the weapons intrusted to us by our country for her defense. We were all drawn up in line before Thy altar and Thou didst listen to our oath, reading in the heart of each of us, one after another, the sincerity and ardor

with which we proffered those words. When we marched in parade to salute our flag unfurled alongside our generals, Thou sawest with what eyes I gazed upon it, upon my flag, and Thou didst hear the silent passionate cry of my heart, with which I promised to consecrate myself to its glory and hold myself ready to give my life for it.

MY God, wilt Thou not hearken to my prayer? Bless our arms, grant them victory on the field of honor. Shall so much young blood be shed in vain? Ah, Lord, Lord, I am blind, I know; I know nothing of Thy designs, I know not the truth, I know not on which side justice lies, I know not which of us is truly fighting for Thee, but it is enough for me to know that in offering my hand and my life to my country I fulfilled in every way a duty that is pleasing to Thee, whatever be the merits of the cause for which my beloved Italy has gone to war. She is my beloved and glorious mother, I have faith in her destinies, and I do not believe that she has regained the blessing of

liberty contrary to Thy design and will. I do not know anything, but to me it seems just that she should want to be entirely free. I do not know anything, but to me it seems just that she should fight against peoples who are slaves of violence and greed, of fraud and pride. Surely neither men nor nations know all; they may err and fail, they may stain themselves with faults and sins, but, unless I am blinded by the tender, measureless love I cherish for my native land, I truly believe that Italy is fighting for justice and that her cause is holy. Why, then, dost Thou not succor her, Lord? Why not aid her, Oh Thou Who canst do all? I do not ask that her victory be easy and short, too easy and too short, I know that even she has a thousand faults and a thousand shortcomings to atone for; I know she has not made the use she should have made of her fifty years of new liberty. I know she has been wicked and wanton and that she has offended Thee in deed and thought, that she has been sacrilegious and ungrateful, but be merciful to her, our Father,

and forgive her. Thou wilt see that she will know how to recognize her own faults and expiate them; Thou wilt see that she will emerge from this war holier and juster, regenerated and purified. I, little and insignificant as I am, a poor, useless servant of Thine, I promise Thee that I will consecrate all my powers to this work, that I will speak and act; I will exhort in public, I will shake consciences, I will strive tirelessly and I feel I shall accomplish something, because by Thy grace, by Thy help, my heart is overflowing with unshakable faith, my Lord and Father. And if Thou wilt that I die here on the battlefield, Thou knowest how to raise up thousands of others a thousand times better than I. There is no lack of good men, no lack of those who want to be good and are waiting only for the word to rouse themselves and unite and fight. There is no lack of hearts that are panting for good, for virtue, for liberty, justice, and love. Oh, I will pray so much for them and will help them after death with my tears and sufferings and adoration. Thou wilt see

that when I have crossed the valley of shadows I shall be strong, I shall know how to multiply myself, like the seed that becomes a shoot, a plant, an ear and then a field of grain, and to inspire thousands upon thousands of souls. Call me to Thee and Thou wilt see, Thou wilt see that I can do it. But help Italy and forgive her, dear Father, beloved Father, my good, merciful, loving Father, my life and the life of the world. Make Italy victorious. When I see what we suffer I certainly am perplexed and I ask myself if Thine anger has not fallen inexorably upon us. When I see the soldiers blaspheming in the mud, marching bent over and exhausted in the driving rain, growing rigid and livid in the stretchers with their bowels wracked by Asiatic cholera, when I see patrols wandering by night on the banks of the disputed river, facing positions that seem impregnable, while the angry ping! of the enemy's rifles whistles in their ears, it is useless to try to appear calm, bold, and unconcerned, or to jolly myself into being gay, reckless, and imperturbable in the face of danger;

it is useless to hide from myself the gravity of so many deficiencies; useless to console myself by thinking of the desperation of our enemies, conquered step by step, pressed back, discouraged, smashed by our artillery; for I think that Thou dost not protect us, that Thou art silent in Thy indignation, that Thou art awaiting a supplicating passionate cry of repentance and promise from us, and then my heart grows cold and I tremble at the lot of my poor brothers. Then I think of the mothers, the wives and sisters, worrying and weeping back there. God, God, God of mercy, wilt Thou not be moved with pity? My God, only one thing I ask of Thee, — drive away quickly this plague that is making our soldiers die here one after the other. Free our regiments quickly from it, now that they are reëquipped, just our regiments, so that the supreme command may choose them again for battle on the Isonzo, on the Carso, on Monte Santo, on Monte Sabotino, where one dies more easily! I know my platoon now, I know my sergeants, my corporals, my privates; I feel that in

the first attack I shall lead them all in a dash, and then throw myself forward into the tempest of fire crying, *Avanti! Savoia! Viva il Re! Viva l'Italia!* and thus I shall die, die happy and exulting. At least I shall not survive the ruin, the sad ruin of my country, crushed under the weight of Thy just anger. If Thou seest and knowest that it is better for us and for the world, for Thee and for Thy glory, that Italy be defeated and her enemies triumph, well, O Lord, I accept Thy decree with my heart, I bow weeping before Thy will, but at least grant me this grace, that I may die beside the flag, which Thou Thyself didst deign to bless yesterday in the presence of our drawn up regiments.

O BLESSED Mary, intercede for me with our common Father, my sweet mother, my beloved sister, thou who canst obtain all from Him, since He was once the fruit of thy virginal womb, Pray for me, Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy, Virgin most powerful, Virgin most clement, Comforter of the afflicted, Queen of all saints.

XLVIII

He Discovers how much more Courage it Takes to Face Life than to Face Death

Sunday, October 10th, 1915

TO-DAY I am on duty at our isolation camp. Last night we had six cases of cholera. I have just made my round of the tents; I spoke with the sergeant and the stretcher bearer, and now I am preparing to stretch myself on my bed of straw in the hope that the night will pass quietly and that there will be no need of calling me to assist those stricken with the disease. O Lord, have pity on us! Holy Mary, help us! St. Michael, come to our aid! It would seem that the disease tends to decrease somewhat in violence, but only yesterday a young lieutenant who had been my comrade at the Costa San Giorgio depot

in Florence, who left with me, and whom I had seen only a few days ago, died suddenly. What terrible days for me! How my heart is disturbed and confused! How my mind is shaken! From one moment to another I pass from hope to despair, not knowing what to think. I feel that this travail of my soul is an effort the more salutary as it is fatiguing and fructified by anguish. Now I perceive that the desire I expressed last night was a cowardly and lazy one. I know now how much more courage it requires to face life than to face death. He is an indolent and cowardly servant, who as soon as some rather tiring duty faces him asks to be relieved from the labor. I get discouraged very quickly, is not that true, O Lord? But at the moment of greatest abjection Thou dost always chide me and encourage me in a hundred ways.

I SEE well, O Lord, that it is Thou Who workest, and that I am only a rebellious and reluctant instrument in Thy wise hands, and, far from coöperating with Thee, I do all I can to spoil Thy work.

I have not a thought that is not blameworthy. I am full of rancor towards others and of overweening complacency towards myself. I get excited because no one hurries to remove the mote that it scandalizes me to see in their eye, while I do not feel the beam that is in my own eye. Hypocrite, hypocrite, and nothing else, that is what I am, a whited sepulcher, a race of vipers, the most abject of all human beings. I actually lack a sense of reality; I have the cruel and absolute violences of judgment that are the result of my inexperience. I condemn with a facility that ought to fill me with terror. I forget to look upon evildoers as poor, sick beings, deserving of my love, of my respect, care, and pity, ailing and unhappy like myself. I forget to see in each one the price of Jesus' redemption, I forget to see even Him as martyred, mocked, condemned, and crucified. I lament because the whole gigantic weight of this war falls on the shoulders of the poor soldiers, the victims of all, ignorant, sorrowful, suffering, weakened by hardships and sufferings, neglected by entire

generations, left to themselves without moral guidance, gone astray through our fault; and then behold me ready to curse these very victims when I find them inert, disobedient, ignorant and impatient. In truth it is impossible, O Lord, to find a brain more depraved and full of deformities than mine; it is impossible to find a more ruffled agitation of strident contradictions, a greater injustice, a lesser sense of responsibility and of duty. And I would be the only savior, while I am only the most culpable, and the one who stands most in need of being saved! Can any madness reach further than mine? Open Thou mine eyes ever more and more, that I may see my wretchedness, O Lord. Perhaps this is the only hope left to me in this desolate sea of perdition. Make me to see myself as I am, and perhaps I shall be saved. Behold the only grace that I deem myself worthy to ask of Thee.

XLIX

He Discovers why the Saints Reject the Merits of their Good Works

Monday, October 11th, 1915

WHY, O Lord, do I feel entirely at ease only when I recognize with sincerity and perfect conviction that I am the vilest of all human creatures? I should like to have oftener one of those salutary moments of lucidity and clairvoyance in which I see all my iniquity and all my impotence without an effort. Yet I am convinced that I never have this lucidity completely and that Thou in Thy loving pity and compassion towards me hidest from me the greater part of my sins and infirmities, that I may not be too downcast and discouraged, and so voluntarily give up as hopeless the enterprise of my regeneration, which would be the extreme of unpardonable baseness.

Ah, Lord, I do not deceive myself, and I know well how longsuffering and indulgent Thou art to all of us. But it is an undeniable fact that only in the rare moments when I half see and in a measure recognize my baseness do I feel a little more reassured and tranquil. Why? The reason is quite clear. It is because at those moments I am no longer so unjust and I render some homage to truth. That I am the most insignificant of men is the most indisputable of all truths. May I at least have the courage to recognize this, and I shall have been just at least once in my life. Too often do I, who know so well what I am, take pleasure in the praises of the world, without repelling them in horror or terror as an absolutely dishonest guerdon fraudulently obtained by deception. May I at least once in awhile make up for this repeated guilt by proclaiming with the greatest energy how unworthy and contemptible I am, by making every effort to undeceive those whom I have tried to delude, seeking in every way to persuade them that I am the first to be convinced of my own

baseness. That will be a moment of repentance and honesty, and the Lord will take it into account, and this is why sincere mortification reanimates me and gives me comfort, for I feel that I have done my duty for once.

I BELIEVE that up there in the kingdom of heaven souls will be the more esteemed and glorified as they have been despised, humbled, and mortified down here, as they have spontaneously and honestly recognized their own lowliness. The just will show their sense of justice by the verdict they will have passed on themselves. Is it not true, St. Francis, that *there* is perfect joy? Is it not true that perfect joy does not consist in being learned, wise, powerful, virtuous, pious, working miracles, but rather in bearing rebuffs, abuse, and cruel persecutions with joy as a just and merited chastisement? Is it not true that in the four months I have girt myself unworthily with thy humble cord, I have never perfectly understood this simple truth? Tell me, thou who art the greatest of all

the saints because thou art the least, the *poverello*, God's little lamb. And you, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John, St. James, St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Chrysostom, St. Anthony, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory, St. Ambrose, and all the endless host that with you has redeemed, saved, and enlightened the world, and the Mother of God herself, with her mortal spouse, and you superhuman women, St. Catharine and St. Theresa, tell me, is it not true that up there you are not honored at all for the great works you performed for the benefit of mankind? Is it not true that you reject the merit of them with unyielding firmness? Is it not true that your works exalt only, prove only, make evident only the glory and the goodness and the mercy and the power of God, Who Himself deigned to work wonderful things in you, without any merit of your own? Is it not true that your personal glory is only in your humility? in having recognized yourselves with the most fervent outburst of sincerity, as humble and sinful servants? Except thee, O Mary, who, bowing before

justice and truth, as thou didst recognize that the Lord "regardeth the humility of his handmaid," had also to recognize thyself as immaculate. Now, if all ye saints of Paradise have had and still have, with the palm of victory, so much reason to be humble, how much more must I despise myself and feel lowly about myself? In truth, O Lord, I have something to frighten me and make me tremble!

AND just to think that heaven and earth also are populated with souls even more worthy to be exalted for their humility than all the most glorious and triumphant saints, and those are the souls that the world has not noticed, those who have remained unknown to all and are known only to God, those souls who have ignored even themselves. In the whole history of mankind they are the unknown and spontaneous ideal, the beauty that is purest because secret and hidden, the flowers of the desert, the pearls of the ocean depths, the gems of the mine.

THUS and not otherwise in the wretched history of my soul, the acts in which I have taken pleasure, which I have fulfilled in order to feel satisfaction, will not be those most worthy of encomium, but those that I have done without noticing, without purpose, with unconscious spontaneity. Would that I were certain that I had done some! But alas, if I am nothing but an iniquitous, unjust, poor, incurable, proud man, the most miserable of the many vain fools who have filled themselves with wind on this wretched earth!

AH, Lord, how many things I would say to Thee now! But grant that I may adore Thee in silence, and prostrate myself at the feet of Thy blessed Mother, of whose true, unspeakable splendor, the light of the world, I was able to catch a glimpse this evening by Thy bounty and grace.

L

He Meditates on Pascal's Commentary on the Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane

Tuesday, October 12th, 1915

IN the midst of this universal abandonment, and finding the friends He had chosen to watch with Him sleeping, Jesus is grieved because of the danger to which they expose, not Him but themselves, and warns them of their own safety and welfare, with heartfelt tenderness for them in their ingratitude, and admonishes them that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

"Finding them again sleeping, and knowing that neither consideration for Him nor for themselves would arouse them, Jesus is kind enough not to awaken them and leaves them to take their rest.

"'You shall be like Gods, knowing

good and evil.' All the world plays the God when it judges this to be good, this to be bad, and when it laments or rejoices overmuch at events."[1]

HERE are two reflections concerning the mystery of Jesus which I copy from the pages of Pascal and which I can apply to my present state of mind. In the face of a multitude of things both great and small, which I am perfectly incapable of valuing, I have been wrong to pass judgment, mourning or rejoicing over them far too much. Some little incidents have filled me with immense hopes — my country regenerated and victorious, the war won with miraculous rapidity — then,

[1] Jésus, au milieu de ce délaissement universel et de ses amis choisis pour veiller avec lui, les trouvant dormant, s'en fâche à du péril où ils exposent, non lui, mais eux-mêmes, et les avertit de leur propre salut et de leur bien avec une tendresse cordiale pour eux pendant leur ingratitude, et les avertit que l'esprit est prompt et la chair infirme.

Jésus, les trouvant encore dormant, sait que ni sa considération ni la leur les en eût retenus, il a la bonté de ne pas les éveiller, et les laisse dans leur repos.

Eritis sicut dii scientes bonum et malum. Tout le monde fait le dieu en jugeant: Cela est bon ou mauvais; et s'affligeant ou se réjouissant trop des événements.

the sight of certain grave evils, above all of a moral character, and consequently fundamental, have made me see victory very far away, difficult of attainment, altogether impossible. And yet my limited experience of life and of history, my most restricted knowledge of the human soul, should have been enough to make me understand that I have no reason either to be too hopeful or too discouraged. In a nation the spirit is always willing but the flesh is ever weak, without exception, as in man, as I have been able to see in myself. The flesh of a nation is the great brute mass of its body, always blind, confused, embarrassed, in a word, weak. Its spirit resides in its intelligence and in its conscience, where one finds a certain number of salutary truths accepted as indisputable, but, as if from malevolence, practiced little, by only a few and by those few badly. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. But there is one part of the redemption, the most difficult and tremendous, that God accomplished once in the history of the world and is accomplishing perpetually

in all souls, in all peoples, and in the entire human race, during our ungrateful, callous, confused, and ignorant sleep. He asks us once to make the effort to watch and pray with Him, then He leaves us to sleep and He acts alone! Ah! Lord, Lord!

LI

He Meditates on the Hypocrisy that Makes us Judge and Deceive our Neighbors

Wednesday, October 13th, 1915

HYPOCRISY, empress of the world, is the evident proof that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, the proof of this truth that is precise and indisputable at every moment, in all degrees and all extensions thereof. In fact, if we were to judge men from their outward appearance, we should have to agree that their moral level is much higher than it is in reality. All, all, O Lord, all of us are whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones and rottenness, but the sense of the good and the perfect is so clear and precise in us that not only is each one of us capable of making himself a severe and meticulous judge of his own fellows, but

is capable also of deceiving his neighbor with outward acts and fine words. And this ought to make us tremble, because it will be our condemnation. When Thy day shall come not one of us will be able to say that he did not know the law, or that a dull intellect fell to his lot. Every one of us has had in him more light than he needed to save himself and the world, yet we all have willed to be slaves to the weakness of the flesh. The Lord commanded us to watch lest we fall into temptation, and we have slept and left Him alone to suffer for us, to sweat blood, to tremble, to weep, to die for our salvation. Even the best of us have slept, the very best have denied Him three times. Such will be the spectacle of our ingratitude when confronted by His patience, long-suffering, generous pity and mercy. And yet, what do we know? Our most difficult duty — which, however, is indispensable to all — is that of doing penance for our hidden sins and for the concealed malice of those we do know, for we shall recognize our faults little by little as we acquire the strength to expiate them.

I STILL esteem as a special grace this ability to catch at times in the midst of my darkness a fleeting glimpse of the horrid abyss of my iniquity. For a few hours only, one might say, I perceive a part of my responsibility, I see how many times I have been deaf to Thine appeals, O Lord, how many times I have disobeyed through negligence and laziness Thy most imperious, most insistent, most touching summons, how many times I have spoiled the plans Thou hast patiently and lovingly prepared for me. I have signed my own death warrant a thousand times, and a thousand times Thou hast offered me the way to repair my guilt. A thousand times I have offended Thee and as many times Thou hast pardoned me without the least anger or impatience. How many opportunities I have lost!

AND I have neglected not only my duties as a man, but also those as a son, a brother, a friend, an Italian, a soldier, a party man, a writer, duties inherent in my caste and my social condition. I was

a careless student, an inefficient master, an avaricious benefactor, a malicious counselor. Besides doing evil as an individual, master of my own fate, absolutely and solely responsible for my own eternal destiny, I have done also the evil of others every time that an action of mine involved the salvation of those with whom I was associated or was responsible for their goodness. How much more serious is this fault if it is true that no man lives to himself, that he must love God above everything and his neighbor as himself; if for the wrong done to the most humble of his brethren he will have to answer as for a wrong committed against Thee, O Lord!

BUT the glory of our salvation will be all Thine, O Lord, and none of it is reserved to us worms of earth. An abyss separates us, an abyss which Thou alone through pity hast willed to bridge over at the price of Thy blood, to give Thyself to us soul and body, Thou the only conqueror, Thou the only glorious.

LII

He reads Ezechiel's Prophecies of God's Wrath and Ultimate Triumph

Thursday, October 14th, 1915

I MUST needs set down here in all its details what happened to me tonight, to impress it so well on my mind that I shall nevermore forget it. I had finished hurriedly writing the last words put down above, as my spent candle sputtered to its final flicker. I prayed, not without some ardor, while the wick, afloat in the pool of wax, still held on to the tiny blue point of its dying flame. Then darkness, a faint patter of drizzling rain on my tent, my thoughts confused in the dozing state that precedes sleep, a greeting from my heart to my mother far away, to my loved ones, to

my sweetheart, then, all at once, voices approaching, a voice that calls me; I tumble with a bound from my mattress and I see the light of a candle outside. It is a corporal summoning the officer on duty to go to a case of cholera. The sleepy voice of the captain reaches me from his tent while I pull on my coat and shoes. Up I get, go outside, hurry across the camp between the tents on the slippery ground.

THE soldier was lying on the bare ground, emaciated, like a ghost, his flesh livid, his face drawn, his eyes sunken, querulous and pitiful. Ah, Lord, what compassion wrung my heart for that poor brother of mine in such anguish that he cried like a baby, in convulsions of vomiting, with his legs racked by cramps. How useless I felt, how powerless and wretched, I, who would have given all my blood to relieve that poor fellow! What could I do but commend him to Thee, and remain there bent over him and suffering with him?

IN the meantime the doctor arrives, with the stretcher bearers. A short visit to make sure of the gravity and urgency of the case, and while one of the stretcher bearers goes back to get the stretcher and two companions, all the soldiers who had been living with the cholera patient are ordered from their tent, breaking their deep sleep, all their belongings are heaped together in a pile and set on fire at once. Smoky, crackling flames rise from the damp straw as it catches. All of us there are lighted up by the reflection, our eyes staring, as we distractedly heap together the burning pile. In that glare the figure of the cholera-stricken man becomes even more spectral. From the torch held in a stretcher bearer's hand, blazing drops of tar fall hissing to the ground. We exchange a few sad words with the doctor, a good young man, full of simple and sincere cordiality, then I address a few stern words to the soldiers present to remind them of the justice of Thy wrath. They nod their heads as a sign of recognition, for no one can resist

the eloquence of Thy language when Thou speakest in anger. But alas, tomorrow, they will probably have forgotten all about it. At last the stretcher arrives, the cholera patient is lifted upon it, made comfortable, and carried away, on the men's shoulders; I give a few brief orders and some admonitions to the soldiers, then I take leave of the doctor, who goes off with his assistant by the light of the torch, and I am left alone in the dark.

O LORD, Thou didst see with what ardor I raised my hands to heaven and prostrated myself to the ground. Thou didst see my anguish, Thou didst hear how I for the thousandth time offered myself to Thee, a voluntary though unworthy victim, if Thou wouldst but deign to grant me as a coveted reward what should be a just chastisement. O my God, make use of me to appease Thine anger. Thou didst see this poor worm that is I return in the darkness to my couch, but not at once to sleep.

MEANWHILE the awful tragedy continues to spread far and near. There on the road along the Judrio the rumbling of a tractor dragging the enormous weight of a three-hundred-and-five-millimeter gun, perhaps the same whose distant booming we heard to-day, as at this moment the constant barking of an incessant cannonade reaches me. My God, what is happening? What carnage is going on? How many lives are being snuffed out? Why am I not there under fire? How beautiful that lot would seem to me! But perhaps Thou art reserving for me a sadder and more painful death, perhaps Thou wouldst have me a victim of the cholera, perhaps of some other even longer and more atrocious disease. Hast Thou decreed for me an inglorious but acute agony accepted with resignation that I may have leisure to make Thee a thousand times in reality that sacrifice which has been so easy to offer Thee a thousand times in words?

THUS was I vaguely thinking last night as I went wearily back to my tent.

From the tent of a comrade near by I got the stump of a candle, and I asked Thee to speak to me in the pages of Thy book. What better message to my faith couldst Thou have sent than that Thou didst open under my eyes? It was the prophecies of Ezechiel, the prophecies of Thy anger, with its wars and devastations and pestilences. I had at once under my eye the thirty-seventh chapter, that of the resurrection of dry bones and of the sticks joined together, and then the thirty-eighth chapter, which after such indignation and wrath closes with the most beautiful and dazzling of all the promises:

AND I will be magnified, and I will be sanctified; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord." [1]

[1] Et magnificabor, et sanctificabor, et notus ero in oculis multarum gentium; et scient quia ego Dominus. (Ezech. xxxviii, 23.)

LIII

He Foresees that the Word of Peace will Come, not from the Wise or Great of the World, but from Some Obscure Mouth

Friday, October 15th, 1915

AH! Yes, yes, we know that Thou art the Lord; let these men know it that have been too long blind. Whatever the cost to them in sacrifice and blood and anguish, it can never suffice to pay for this truth which will be their earthly happiness and their eternal salvation. Be Thou magnified, O Lord, be Thou sanctified, be Thou known to the eyes of many people. My God, what joy for me to feel that Thou art loved and praised by all! What a relief to hear the strident tones of many discordant and contending voices stilled

little by little — the voices of so many little vanities enkindled one against another and fighting among themselves with such ridiculous, presumptuous bragging in that poor world that it is usual to call pompously the world of the spirit! How will the word of peace come in the midst of the slaughter, the blood and the clamor of battle? In whatsoever way it came, unexpected and unsuspected, however different from our previsions, may that word be blessed from now on. When it shall sound it will, perhaps, be derided and rejected, all men will perhaps have their eyes and souls turned elsewhere, it will perhaps seem humble, poor, useless, inopportune, it will perhaps be listened to with contempt. All will look to the kings, to the emperors, to the ministers, to the generals, to the plenipotentiaries in solemn conclave, all will look for salvation and peace from an enormous force of artillery, or from a stupendous agreement of statesmen, from a clash of armies or from a diplomatic discussion. The true word, the saving word, will have been spoken almost unnoticed, a few fools,

madmen, and visionaries, will have turned to listen to it amid the universal distraction. Once again, however, the grave and ponderous wisdom and prudence of the world, of the great and the powerful, shall be laughed at and put to scorn by victorious foolishness, by Thy sacred foolishness, O Lord, Who willest to conquer with the despised weapons of defeat. Once again, as it happened once before in history, and perpetually takes place in every one of our souls and in all the vicissitudes of the human race, the stone that was rejected will become the head of the corner. All the proudest and most subtle foresight will come to nought. What every one thought was the last will become the first. I do not know how it will come to pass, but I believe that thus it will be. Contrary to all the rules of art, the person least thought of will become the protagonist. Men will be carried away against their own will. God will speak through the mouths of those who have denied Him. The scribes will have to condescend to discuss it, with an impatience full of disgust, as one

discusses with some obstinate fool a question already decided and buried by universal consent; then the dispute will become more bitter, for the least thought of fencer will strike almost haphazard the most formidable blows. The outcry and the marvel will increase. The most ancient and simple truths will reëcho like the freshest of novelties, teeming with new life, resounding in all hearts. At every hour there will be a fresh cry of wonder. Bored impatience will become first intense gravity, then furious and impotent anger; innocent simplicity will become ever more terrible, fearless, indomitable; crowds will be upset; sudden revelations will throw open cloistered souls; shouts of enthusiasm and love will be raised to heaven, and Thou shalt be victorious once again, O Lord. Neither force, nor shrewdness, nor tenacity will be magnified in blood and slaughter. Thou alone wilt be acknowledged, Thou alone adored, Thou alone exalted.

HOW this hope inebriates me! — this hope? — this certainty! Shall I see this

day up there or down here? Shall I too have contributed to Thy victory? Shall I be among the elect? I do not want to be impatient. I would have the smile of thy secure calm, O Lord, without the unbecoming anxieties that are signs of weakness and uncertainty. I should like it to be just as it is in this war of my earthly country. For several days the imminence of a decisive action, a determined advance on the eastern front, has been foreseen and guessed, while the artillery is rapidly being disposed to prepare and support the charge of the infantry. Some cowards tremble already at the idea. I burn with impatience, I cannot see the hour, but I would hasten the moment, I would I were now in action. I was saying this to-night at mess.

"KEEP cool," the major commanding our battalion said to me paternally; "we shall move when we are ordered. Don't be impatient. Even knowing how to wait is a virtue."

WELL, I wait and I prepare myself, poor improvised, inexperienced little officer! Thus do I wait and pray, poor militant Christian, without spiritual power, without light, little prodigal son returning to his father's house naked and famished and trembling, but overflowing with faith and love. Dear Father, make this my ardor avail me, make my good will avail. Make me a participator and coöperator in Thy certain victory.

LIV

He Serenely Commends his Soul to God on the Eve of Battle

Saturday, October 16th, 1915

I AM on guard duty in camp this evening, and am writing in the midst of my corporals and sergeant, at the kitchen table of Friulani farmers. This evening at mess, in the smoke and the hubbub of our table, our major announced the probability of a sudden alarm, as a consequence of which it would be necessary to strike camp immediately. I do not know if this announcement is a forerunner of grave and unexpected events, but everything leads me to believe that it is a test desired by our colonel to try our swiftness. Anyhow, the night will not be peaceful for me, for I shall be the first to receive the announcement, and it will

be my duty to rouse the camp and to move the sentinels, whilst on the other hand I shall have to release the prisoners and get them back to their respective companies, and hurry to my company quarters for my baggage and to strike the tents of my men.

BUT if the alarm were true? if we should have to depart in haste and advance towards the firing line? If to-morrow we should be engaged in battle, going into the fight, moving forward to the attack? Thank heaven this probability does not change my tranquillity in the least, and does not make my heart beat any faster. So far as I can see, with the most attentive curiosity, I do not feel the least trace of anxiety or worry, as I did not feel it on one of those first nights when I found myself in the reserves of the first line at upper Nekovo, getting ready to go and gathering up the rolls of barbed wire left behind by the Austrians on the right bank of the Isonzo, under the near fire from their advanced trenches; as I did not feel it a few nights later when I went

round inspecting the trenches of our patrols at San Vito and walked half the night between the entanglements and the blockhouse at the Isonzo bridgehead, chatting, eating juicy pears and apples, listening to the voices of our enemies close by, not in the least perturbed even when they threw the beams of their searchlights upon us; as I did not feel it at the reserve camp when I recognized the angry crescendo screech of a hand grenade that fell very close to our barracks. I do not know what I shall feel when facing immediate danger, at the spectacle of the butchery around me, at the sight of the fallen, in the moment of peril, but I truly hope that the Lord God has given me the grace of a fairly brave heart which nothing can shake. I hope that if I fall I shall fall like a good strong soldier, with calm, serene, and fearless courage; I hope that I shall show myself intrepid before my soldiers; I hope that the death so many times desired and invoked will not succeed in overcoming me with cowardly, childish fright, but that I shall welcome it smiling, like a

good friend, and accept it with honor, like a dear, precious, coveted reward. If I have time, my last thought shall be one of gratitude to Thee, O Lord, for having reserved for me a lot so highly enviable and desirable, for having offered me a way to spend my life so well, in the service of my adored country and king, according to Thy holy precepts which have imposed upon me love of country as one of my most cherished and sweetest duties.

WHAT a beautiful and fortunate life mine has been! Well do I realize that I have not deserved it; I recognize that I have not known how to use it worthily as I ought, like a magnificent treasure, too long despised and blindly wasted with most foolish ingratitude. And yet Thy solicitous love, my Father, has been able with infinite wisdom and untiring patience to remedy my sins and negligences in a thousand ways, and to-day I am ready for Thy summons and I can confide without presumption in Thy indulgent goodness. If I shall have to separate

myself from this world, my heart will not be wrung with the anguish of uncertainty; the event will not come upon me unexpected, like an awful thunderbolt; it will not find me unprepared, despairing, perplexed, terrified. I will go to meet Thy justice sorrowing but full of confidence, and I shall be able without a blush to commend my spirit into Thy hands. I shall accept with exulting heart the pains that await me, well knowing that they will be many, long, and excruciating, to the end that all my debt be paid to the uttermost farthing, and I shall bow willingly and without reluctance before Thy divine justice. I shall be sure that Thy will be done, that Thy kingdom come, that Thy triumph will shine among Thy children, O Lord, our Father Who art in heaven. Mary, pray for me at the hour of my death. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

AMEN.

Giosuè Borsi's Last Letter to his Mother

October 21st, 1915

Mother:

THIS letter, which you will receive only in case that I should fall in battle, I am writing in an advanced trench, where I have been since last night, with my soldiers, in expectation of the order to cross the river and move to the attack.

I intended to write it with less haste, and with more calm, to-day, if, as everything led me to believe, we had remained one day longer, encamped at Zapotok. Last night I was getting ready to go to sleep in my tent, and was thinking, with true joy, that on the morrow I would have a whole tranquil day to get ready for the great ordeal. At dawn I would have heard Mass and received Holy Communion, then I would have

written you this farewell letter, and finally, at peace with the world, with myself, and with God, I would have waited for the evening in meditation and prayer, talking to my dear soldiers, ready for any emergency, well prepared for any event and fully detached from all earthly ties.

But the order came suddenly to raise the camp and to prepare ourselves for the approaching encounter with the enemy. Lieutenant Maltagliati, my tent companion, and I looked at one another as much as to say: "At last the order has come!" We clasped hands with that fraternal, sweet effusion which only he who has been in war can understand. In a short time we were armed and in order; I assembled my platoon, called the roll and hastened to the seat of the battalion command to review attentively the whole plan of attack, with topographical maps in hand. The colonel spoke some words and shook hands with us, one by one. Finally we started to march in the moonlight, ascended the mountain, descended the opposite slope,

and, having reached the Isonzo River, we formed in line.

I worked with my troops till dawn, digging our trench. I placed there three of my squads and brought a fourth one along with me, in this covered trench, left by the outposts. Beneath this trench flows the Isonzo, which we can view from the loopholes in all its enchanting beauty. Upward, on our left, is that spot on the river bank where the bridge will be thrown across for our passage. Downwards, there is the Plava bridge-head with two regiments ready to strengthen our advance. In front of me, on the opposite bank, lies a beautiful, happy little town. It is Descla, one of the objectives of the action entrusted to us.

The battle commenced this morning at dawn, with the firing of our magnificent and formidable artillery. The spectacle has been terribly superb and majestical. All enemy positions have been bombarded with a hail of projectiles of all calibres. All enemy trenches have been overturned, one by one, loophole by

loophole with an inexorable, mathematical precision. An Austrian patrol, that occupied a trench on my right, was seen buried, and two soldiers were hurled into the air like straws. The enemy artillery answered feebly and without result. On the path leading to the trench occupied by me, and where the enemy, perhaps, observed some troops movement, fell about forty grenades, but only five or six of them exploded, without causing us the least damage. Near our trench about twenty shells fell, but only one hit the mark, wounding a soldier and breaking a rifle. Now it is afternoon. On our wings there is a most violent and furious rifle engagement, while the artillery keeps up its own work. Little we know of what is going on around us. I had my lunch a little while ago, and exchanged some words and some notes with the officers of the two platoons that are on our sides, Maltagliati of the first and Viviani of the third.

My soldiers are dozing, the expectation is prolonged and I have decided to begin

writing to you with the hope that time will not fail me to tell you at least a part of my thoughts and of the affections which are overflowing in my heart for you, mother dear.

I am calm, perfectly serene, and firmly resolved to do my duty in full to the last, like a brave and good soldier, confident to the utmost of our final unfailing victory; although I am not equally sure that I will live to see it. But this uncertainty does not trouble me in the least, nor has it any terror for me. I am happy in offering my life to my country; I am proud to spend it for so noble a purpose, and I know not how to thank Divine Providence for the opportunity — which I deem an honor — afforded me on this fulgent autumnal day, in the midst of this enchanting valley of our Julian Venetia, while I am in the prime of life, in the fullness of my physical and mental powers, to fight in this holy war for liberty and justice.

All is propitious to me, all is favorable to die a beautiful and glorious death; the weather, the place, the season, the oppor-

tunity, the age. A better end could not have crowned my life, and I feel the pleasure to have made a good and generous use of it. Do not grieve over my death, mother, or else you will offend my good fortune. Do not weep, mother, for it was written in Heaven that I should die. Do not mourn, mother, or else you would regret my happiness. I am not to be mourned but envied.

You know the ineffable hopes that give me comfort because they are the very same hopes in which you also have placed all that is dear to you. When you read these words of mine, I will be free, unfettered and in a safe place, far from the miseries of this world. My struggle will be finished and I shall be peaceful; my daily death shall have come to an end, and I shall be face to face with the Judge Whom I have greatly feared, to the Lord Whom I have greatly loved.

Think of it, mother dear, when you read these words. I shall view you from Heaven, side by side with our dear ones, with father, with my dear Laura, with Dino, our Guardian Angel. We shall

be in the regions above, all united to celebrate your arrival, to watch over you and over Gino, to prepare for you, with our prayers, the place of your everlasting glory. Should not this thought alone be sufficient to dry your tears and to fill you with unspeakable joy?

No, no, weep not, my dear and saintly mother, and be brave, as you always have been. Should the pleasure of having offered to our adored Italy, this glorious land, this land predestined by God, should the pleasure of having offered the sacrifice of the life of one of your sons, be not sufficient for you, remember, nevertheless, that you must not rebel, not even for one instant, to the divinely wise and divinely loving decrees of our Lord. If He wanted to reserve me for other work, He could have permitted me to survive. Since He has called me to Himself, it is a sign that such was the best thing that could have happened and the best thing for me. He knows what He is doing, and it remains for us to bow and to adore, accepting with trustful joy His most exalted will.

I do not bemoan life. I have tasted of

all its infatuations and have withdrawn with an insurmountable weariness and disgust.

Like a young prodigal son, after so many wanderings, having returned to the house of the father, I could have hoped now, and reasonably so, to taste of the good joys, the joys of duty well performed, of the good practiced and preached, the joys born of art, of labor, of charity, of a fruitful mind.

Side by side with the good, beautiful girl whom you know and esteem, and whom I have always loved, always so tenderly, timidly, and faithfully loved, even in the midst of my errors and blameworthy blunders, I could have hoped to make a good husband and a good father.

In the world there are so many battles to fight, for love, for justice, for liberty, for the faith, and for a time, I must confess, I presumptuously believed myself predestined and assigned to the arduous and terrible task of winning one or another of these battles.

All this was, I admit, beautiful, flattering, desirable, but it cannot compare

with my present lot. This is the very truth, and indeed I cannot say whether I would really be satisfied if the writing of this letter would have been in vain. Life is sad; it is a painful and annoying duty, a long exile in the uncertainty of our own lot. In order that life may go quickly in accordance with my wishes, and without leaving me in a thousand disappointments, there would be need of many very rare and difficult occurrences. Besides, I am and I feel weak, I have not the least confidence in myself. The whole battle against the ingratitude and wickedness of the world would not have frightened me as much as the battle against myself. It is better, therefore, dear mother, as it has happened. The Lord, in His wise and infinite wisdom, has reserved me for just the destiny that was fit for me; a destiny that is easy, sweet, honorable, rapid: to die in battle for one's country.

With this beautiful and praiseworthy past, fulfilling the most desired of all duties as a good citizen towards the land that gave him birth, I depart, in the midst

of the tears of all those that love me, from a life toward which I felt weary and disgusted. I leave the failings of life, I leave sin, I leave the sad and afflicted spectacle of the small and momentary triumphs of evil over good. I leave to my humble body the weight of all my chains and I fly away, free, free in the end, to the heavens above, where resides our Father, to the heavens above where His holy will is always done. Just imagine, dear mother, with what joy I will receive from His hands even the chastisements that His justice will impose on account of my sins. He Himself has paid all these chastisements by His superabundant merits, a God of mercy and of love, redeeming me with His precious blood, living and dying here below for my sake. Only through His grace, only through Jesus Christ, could I have succeeded that my sins be not my eternal death. He has seen the tears of my sorrow. He has pardoned me through the mouth of His spotless spouse, the Church. I do sincerely hope that the Madonna, so loving and kind toward us, will assist me with

her powerful help in the instant when my eternity will be decided.

And as I am about to speak of forgiveness, dear mother, I have only one thing to say with all simplicity: Forgive me! Forgive me all the sorrows that I have caused you; all the agonies that you have suffered on my account every time I have been ungrateful, stubborn, forgetful, disobedient toward you. Forgive me if, by neglect and inexperience, I have failed to render your life more comfortable and tranquil since the day when my father, by his premature death, intrusted you to my care. Now I understand well the many wrongs I have been guilty of toward you, and I feel all the remorse and cruel anguish now that dying I have to intrust you to the providence of the Lord. Forgive me lastly this final sorrow that I have inflicted upon you, perhaps not without stubborn and cruel inconsideration on my part, in giving up my life voluntarily for my country, fascinated by the attractions of this beautiful lot. Forgive me also if I have not sufficiently recognized and tried to compensate the

incomparable nobility of your soul, of your heart, so immense and sublime mother, truly perfect and exemplary, to whom I owe all that I am and whatever good I may have done in this world.

I have so many things to say that a book could hardly contain them. Nothing else, therefore, is left me but to recommend you to our Gino, on whose goodness, on whose integrity, and on whose strength of will, I put all my trust. Tell him in my name to serve willingly our country as long as she will have need of him, to serve her with abnegation, with ardor, with enthusiasm, even unto death, should that be necessary. Should he be destined to live a long and struggling life, let him be equal to it with serenity, with firmness, with indomitable love for justice and honesty, trusting always in the triumph of good with God's grace. Let him be a good husband and a good father; let him raise up his children in the love of God, respect for the Church, fidelity toward our King, to the observance of the law, to scrupulous devotion to our beloved country. Think often of us here

above; speak of us among yourselves; remember us and love us as when we were alive, because we shall always be with you.

Pray often for me, for I am in need of it. Be courageous in the trials of life, as you have always been strong and energetic in the midst of the tempest of your earthly career; continue to be humble, pious, charitable, so that the peace of God may always be with you.

Good-by, mother; good-by, Gino, my dear and my beloved! I embrace you with all the ardor of my immense love, which has increased a hundredfold during my absence in the midst of the dangers and hardships of the war. Here, far away from the world, always with the image of imminent death, I have felt how strong are the ties that bind us to this world; how mankind is in need of mutual love, of faith in each other, of discipline, of harmony, of unity, what necessary and sacred things are the fatherland, the home, the family; how blameworthy is the person who renounces these, who betrays and oppresses them.

Love and freedom for all, this is the ideal for which it is a pleasure to offer one's life. May God cause our sacrifice to be fruitful; may He take pity upon mankind, forgive and forget their offenses, and give them peace. Then, oh! dear mother, we shall not have died in vain. Just one more tender kiss.

GIOSUÈ BORSI

Spiritual Will and Testament

AT Florence, this Wednesday, November 25th, 1914. With this my present holographic testament, I dispose of all my spiritual goods as follows:

The infallible secret of perfect happiness

I INSTITUTE as my heirs in common all those who at the hour of my death may love me enough to have confidence in the fruits of my experience. I leave to each one of them all and entire my inestimable wealth, which is the infallible secret of perfect happiness. The supreme value of this legacy is that it is a treasure known to and within the reach of all, that many possess and have possessed, that can be given and transmitted entire without the loss of even the smallest particle, that its owner even desires to share with others, well knowing that the more there are who

share it with him, the greater it grows for the giver. It is necessary to all, living and dead, in every place, age, and condition. It is the sole possession one is permitted to carry with him after death, not merely intact but multiplied a hundredfold, although it is real and actual property. Every living person can acquire it if he desire. He who has it not is lost or runs the risk of being lost at any moment, so it is urgent to provide one's self with it as soon as possible, for the day in which one will have vainly to repent his own blindness and unpardonable negligence will surely come; on the other hand, he who has been wise enough to get it, diligently acquiring and jealously guarding it, has no need of anything else, either in this world or in eternity.

HERE, summed up in a few words for every one of those who will listen to my posthumous and fraternal exhortations, is this inestimable secret:

Be a Christian; frequent the Sacraments, and follow the precepts of the Apostolic

Roman Catholic Church. This is the sole duty that matters; this is the unique unfailing happiness; this is the one sure good.

The first condition of true wisdom

Item: Be not so foolish as to believe in the innate virtue of man; so unreasonable as to hope in the justice of the world; so vain as to cultivate desires or, worse still, ambitions for human glory; so ignoble as to worry after earthly riches and pleasures; so blind as to put thy trust in the wisdom of men. All the goods of the world are a mixture of lees and pure wine, good or evil according to the use that is made of them; so hold that the first condition of true wisdom is understanding of how possession or deprivation of them may equally be prized. In fact, grief and joy mean nothing but the loss or gain of some good thing, so when thou knowest that there is but one Good, thou wilt have but one grief to fear, but one joy for which to hope. This is why our happiness depends upon ourselves

and we are the real and responsible architects of our destiny.

The first commandment

Item: Recognize once and for all that thy spirit is such that it can be satisfied with nothing but an eternal, immutable, and infinite happiness. Therefore refuse to drink any earthly water, for it will leave thee thirsty still. Drink the waters of Heaven, and thy thirst will be quenched forever. Desire and love absolute beauty, absolute truth, absolute goodness; do not content thyself with a little, for in comparison with the infinite a little is as nothing. Stop not halfway, at every inn, when thou knowest that at the end of the road thou wilt find the banquet of supreme grace. In one word, love God. This is the first commandment on which all the others depend, as was said to the doctor of the law. (Matt. xxii, 37, 38.)

The sole certainty that is stable here below

Item: Be an earnest and respectful son of the Church, which is the unde-

filed Spouse of the Lamb, the provident mother of the saints, and the living image of the heavenly Jersualem. And believe that there is one faith and one baptism, that the Pope is the lawful successor of Peter, the sole and infallible vicar of Jesus Christ upon earth. This is the single certainty that is stable here below, where all is uncertain and changeable. Outside the Church there is only error, presumption, and obscurity; that is, almost certain perdition, for a man outside the Church is alone, a miserable atom that lives for a moment in the midst of terrifying perils, lost and swallowed up in the fearsome spaces of the universe, while a man in the bosom of the Church enjoys, through the Communion of saints, the richest of graces and infinite benefits, in which are coöperating in a thousand ways all his brethren, militant, expectant, and triumphant, all the twofold endless army of souls and angels.

THE civil benefits of the most refined and long-lived human societies can give

only the palest, faintest, and most imperfect idea of it, for the peoples of the world pass, and the people of God is eternal. But in order to enjoy the immortal benefits of the association it is necessary to obey the Law and to frequent the Sacraments. Only he who frequents them can know what a potent aid to our weakness they are and be in a position to judge with what prophetic and infallible knowledge of the human soul they were instituted. They are like a ruler for tracing a straight line; where the line wavers and is shaky we are quite certain that it was the hand that trembled. The Sacraments reveal man to himself.

Be not severe except to thyself

Item: Beware of incontinence and its dangers: keep thyself from violence and blindness, but above all scorn and fight without truce in thyself and in others that abject vice of malice, the repugnant, poisonous fruit of envy and pride. Fight it without mercy and hate it with all thy heart, if it is true that thou lovest men with all thy heart; pursue it furi-

ously, indignantly, and with ridicule; shame it; scorn it; persistently chase it away with unflagging courage and without ever descending to make terms or compromise. It is the privilege of truth to be gay and innocent as a child, appalling and inexorable as an archangel. But love men tenderly; love them with humility and trust and without diffidence; love them as thyself; excuse them obstinately; force thyself to understand them and to seek out the most ingenious of excuses for them. Love the wicked fervently; but above all love beggars, fools, and cripples and devote to them the most assiduous beats of thy heart and thy most careful and earnest solicitude. The first are the outcasts of fortune, which is capricious and unjust; the second are the outcasts of intelligence, which errs and is extinguished; the third are the outcasts of beauty, which passes and decays. Remember that they are thy brethren, beloved of the Father, and they can do thee much good with him. Bow thy head before them and thou wilt

be exalted, while bowing down to the powerful ones of the world is the most degrading baseness. Always forgive, not once only nor seven times, but seventy times seven, for one may not put a limit upon what one does for the love of God. Forgive, for, in so doing, thou wilt be like unto God, Who is merciful, Who is mercy itself. Forgive, for this is the only means of being forgiven. Rather obey than command. Never judge. Be indulgent towards all. Be not severe except to thyself.

The excuse of the coward

Item: Set not up the cowardly excuse of the world's example. The love of God is invincible and there is no iniquity of man that can overcome it even if it would. On the day of the Lord circumstances will be no excuse. So linger not in idle lamentation over the irremediable moral decadence that is so general, or over the uselessness of every effort. This shameful excuse will be available at all times, but only for the listless and the inept. Do thou be the first

to begin: a single sincere example is worth more than a thousand eloquent and solemn prayers.

There is not a single valid argument against the Catholic faith

Item: Renounce reason where thou seest that reason is impotent, for, to persist in making use of it when it is no longer in a position to help thee is, instead of being a homage as thou dost imagine, the worst offense thou canst commit against it. Making use of reason in judging matters of faith is as stupid and ridiculous as trying to use the senses to get perception of ideas. Ideas have neither form nor color, and yet their existence is none the less indubitable than that of things, for it is quite easy to convince one's self by reasoning that their number is infinite, and that each one of them is eternal, simple, and immutable, which is not the case with the objects that are perceived by the corporeal senses. Reason itself exhorts thee not to make use of it in that which is beyond its power.

Nevertheless, do not believe that truths which are superior to reason are contrary to it, for even the mere following of them is reasonable, and abandoning them is error and madness. If thou believest that I affirm too much, do not accept my word, but believe in thyself. Before condemning the faith, learn to know it. Faith at times is content with little, with not being condemned by him who does not know it — "it asks but one thing: not to be condemned in ignorance," in the words of Tertullian. "Seek and ye shall find; ask and you shall receive; knock and it shall be opened unto you." And thou wilt see that there is not one single valid argument, not one single plausible objection against the Catholic faith, and in reality all those that are set up against it arise from not knowing it — all, without a single exception.

When thou shalt have become a good Catholic, practicing those inimitable precepts with which death shall be conquered by love; when thou knowest that thou wilt leave in the hands of

death nothing but thy mortality, "and there shall be no more death"; when the reality of existence appears to thee no longer as that mixture of mawkish, bestial pleasures and of atrocious and unjustified pains, that absurd, incoherent, crazy mystery with which, to their mockery, the impious and unbelievers are constrained to content themselves; when thou no longer fearest anything outside of thyself and feelest thyself so completely the master of thine own fate that thy constancy in courage, in uprightness, and in justice will not be disturbed even by their own wanderings, then, my friend, fearless and free, thou wilt feel horror at the intractable slave that thou wast before, and wilt see how insolent and ridiculous thou wast; then thou wilt fear and laugh at thyself, just as on the inevitable day the just — the fruitful olive trees — will laugh over the man who did not ask the help of God. "The just shall see and fear and shall laugh at him." (Ps. li, 8–10.)

This is my irrevocable testament and

by it I intend to revoke any preceding contrary disposition, desiring that this alone shall have full effect.

Written entirely, given and subscribed by my hand.

GIOSUÈ BORSI

243.9
So 42b

Borsi, Giosuè

A soldier's confidences with God.

243.9
So 42b